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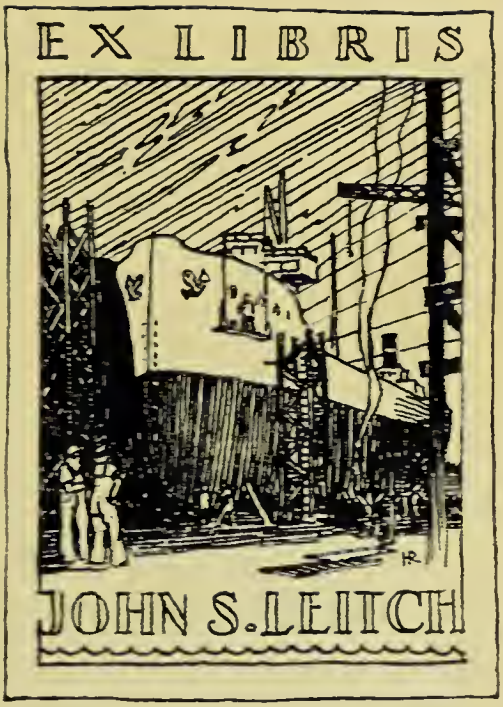
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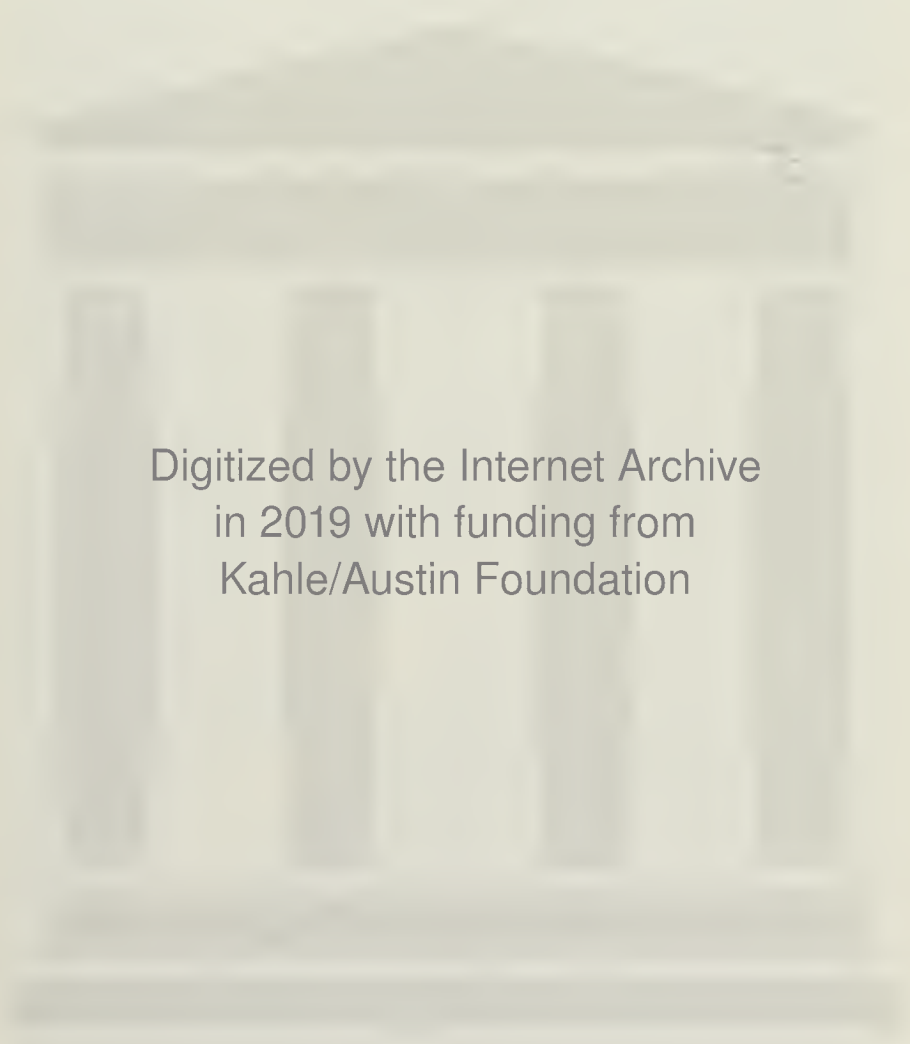
MEMORIES OF A BLUE-JACKET



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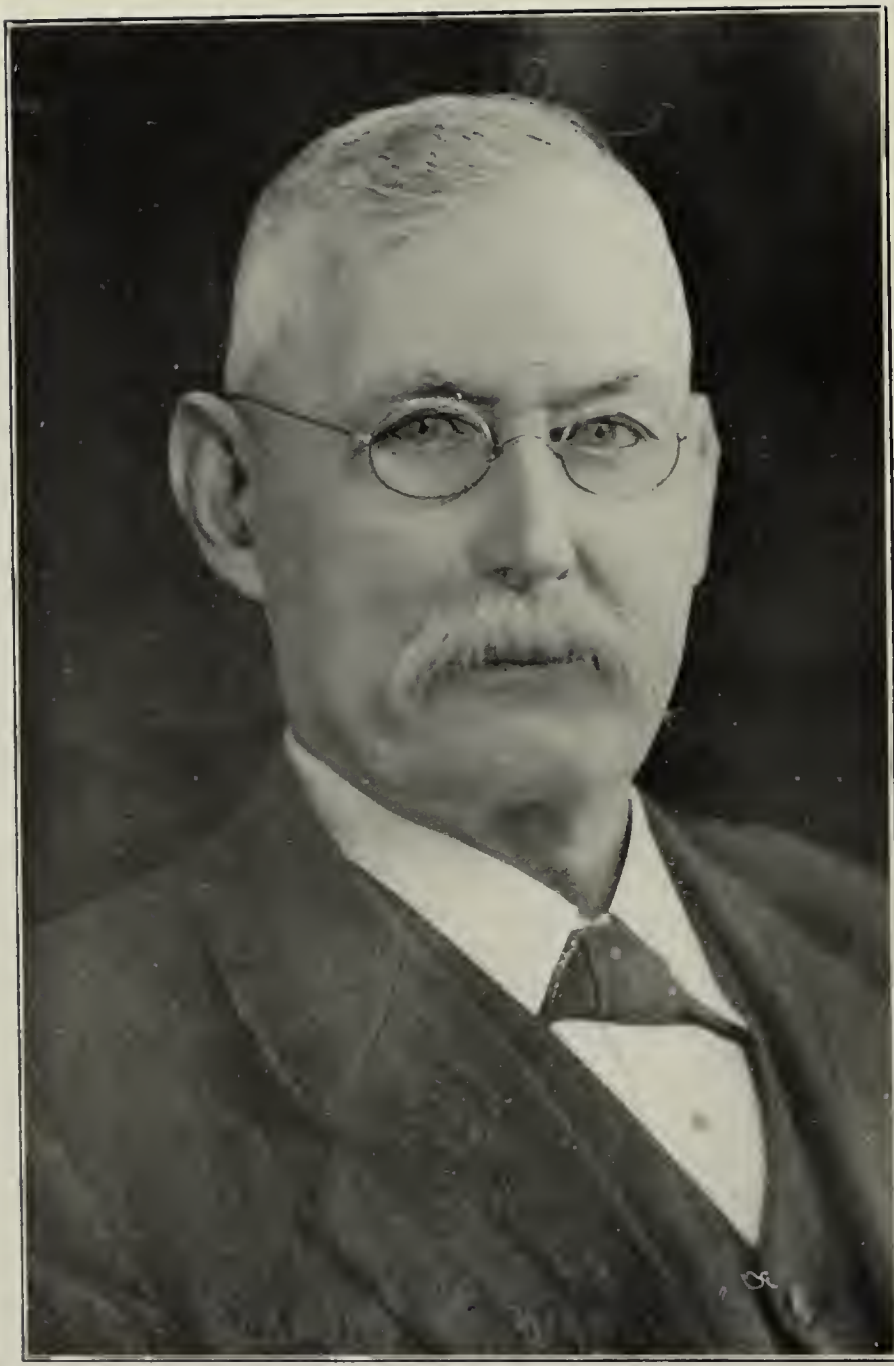

Frontispiece

THE WHEELS OF TIME

MEMORIES OF A BLUE-JACKET

1872—1918

BY

PATRICK RILEY

Eighteen years Gunnery Instructor, Royal Navy

LONDON
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & CO., LTD.

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I Dedicate this Book
to that Grand Service
The Royal Navy
And to All My Old Shipmates

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY PURNELL AND SONS
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Author's Preface

In writing my autobiography, I make no claim to literary ability.

I have endeavoured to put before my readers a clear and lucid description of the life of a Blue Jacket from the lower deck point of view.

Delving into my memories of long ago has been to me, a labour of love.

I have received every assistance from the Admiralty Library, to get what information I required to compile my book, for which I make the most sincere acknowledgment to them. It has also given me great pleasure to receive many letters from the several Admirals with whom I have been shipmates, congratulating me on my work.

285183

Forewords

ADMIRAL A. K. BICKFORD, C.M.G.

Mr. Patrick Riley is writing under the title of *Memories of a Blue-jacket* an account of his life at Sea. He has kindly sent me the manuscript of the earlier portion of his life. Including his entry and training as a boy also his life in his first sea-going ship H.M.S. *Amethyst*, from June 1874 to June 1878, during this period I was first and gunnery Lieutenant of that ship, therefore can speak as to the reliability of his narrative.

I must certainly congratulate Mr. Riley on the clearness and lucidity of style and also his really remarkable memory, and which as written from the lower deck point of view is most interesting and instructive. His account, also of his early training in the Training ships and gunnery school gives a very clear and good idea of the hard training in vogue in those days. Speaking personally and judging from the position of his life I have read, I consider it likely to be found most interesting and instructive to all who take an interest in the English Navy, and what Englishman does not? I congratulate Mr. Riley and wish him every success in his venture. I may mention that Mr. Riley as I knew him from early days of 1874 to 1878 was a smart youngster. He joined the ship as a boy and paid off as an able seaman and trained man (gunnery).

His old shipmate,

A. K. BICKFORD,

Admiral.

Forewords

VICE-ADMIRAL SIR ERNLE CHATFIELD, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.V.O.

This simple tale of the life of a sailor on the lower deck, covering the period of change from sail to steam, will appeal not only to those who follow the sea profession but to all who love the sea.

The story is told with much charm and interest, and in a spirit typical of that mutual loyalty and comradeship between officer and man which is one of the mainstays of the Naval Service.

That part of the story which relates the writer's experiences in the Corvette *Amethyst* is in accurate agreement with the records in my Father's diary.

I hope the book will find a place in all libraries afloat and in many ashore.

ERNLE CHATFIELD,
Vice-Admiral.

BY ADMIRAL SIR WILLIAM HANNAM HENDERSON, K.B.E.

The author served with me in H.M.S. *Edgar* and was a Chief Petty Officer of great ability and value as these experiences of his services will show. They came during the period of change from sail to steam as the means of propulsion and the beginning of the era of mechanism, which has since permeated the Navy and should be interesting and instructing to those who care about the Service.

W. H. HENDERSON,
Admiral.

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MEMORIES OF A BLUE-JACKET

CHAPTER I

MY HANKERING FOR A LIFE ON THE SEA

THE lure of the sea has had me in its grip since my early childhood days.

At the time the forts on Drake's Island were being built, my father was foreman to the contractor, Mr. Hubbard, who was carrying out the work. We lived in one of the houses on the Island, which can be seen from Plymouth Hoe even to this day. Being rather a precocious child, the apprentices who were boarded with us used to have great fun with me after working hours. They would take me down to the water, find some pool between the rocks, take off my clothes and souse me in, letting me scramble about to my heart's content. Whenever they went bathing in some of the quiet little nooks around the island, I was always to be found in the party. I was a proper "Sea baby" and I cannot remember when I was first able to swim.

I am able to relate these facts of my childhood from what I was told by one of the apprentices, an old marine, who was, many years afterwards, a shipmate of mine in H.M.S. *Defence*.

When the forts were finished, we moved to the mainland, and as Mr. Hubbard had to carry out the extension at Keyham Dockyard, my father remained with him.

Memories of a Blue-jacket

Unfortunately for us, my mother died when I was nine. Father had his work to attend to every day, with the result that, after school hours I was left very much on my own, a bit of a free lance.

I never seemed to care to mix with other boys of my own age and play their games, but I always had a hankering after the sea. Whenever it was fine, I would make my way to Plymouth Hoe, stretch myself on the grass, with both elbows on the ground, rest my chin in my palms, and remain there for hours looking out to sea towards the Eddystone Lighthouse and the "Great Beyond," watching the ships steaming or sailing by.

My great attraction, when I was between twelve and thirteen years old, was the naval training brigs, watching them as they were moored in a line between Drake's Island and Millbay. To my young mind they looked wonderful. Everything about them appeared so neat and trim; their broad white painted bands running right round the ship in a line with the gunports. The brass on the tompions of the guns, whose muzzles showing out of the portholes shone in the sun, made a splendid picture with Drake's Island as a background, and appealed to my longing eyes.

The brigs, five in number, were attached to the different training ships. They were fitted out every summer, taking drafts of boys from the training ships for special training in working ship under sail at sea, thus enabling the boys to acquire their sea-legs before being drafted to a sea-going ship. I was delighted whenever I saw them sailing away from their buoys.

June, 1871, my father left for South Wales, taking my two sisters. I begged him to allow me to remain at Plymouth with my aunt, as I wanted to join the Royal Navy.

Attached to her house was a long shed having cross-beams and from these I used to swing at every

H.M. Brig Squirrel, 1873, sailing away from Drake's Island

Face page 2

opportunity in order to stretch and expand my chest to make myself big enough for the Navy.

In the early part of October, 1872, I saw on some recruiting posters for the Royal Navy that the lowest standard height for boys was four feet ten inches.

I ran home and measured myself against the door and thought I was over the height required, and told my aunt I was big enough to join the Navy. I begged her to see a magistrate whom she knew personally, and ask him for a recommendation for me to take on board H.M.S. *Impregnable*, the training ship at Devonport.

My aunt called on the magistrate and he gave her a very good recommendation. She had to fill in a form, giving particulars of my parentage, nationality, date of birth and religion. They were not too particular in those days about birth certificates.

I was delighted when my aunt gave me the recommendation, saying it was all right, and I at once made my way to the shed to have a final swing, being determined to bring myself up to the standard. Next morning I left home, telling my aunt that if I did not return she would know I had succeeded in joining, and not to worry herself until she saw me again.

I walked to Devonport, and by making inquiries found my way to Mutton Cove, from where I saw two big ships moored the other side of the harbour.

Several watermen were standing about on the quayside. I told one of them I wanted to join the Navy and asked him if he would take me on board the *Impregnable*.

He looked me up and down and smiled, saying, "You're rather on the small side, my lad, but there's nothing like trying; remember, 'a faint heart never won a fair lady.' "

I have often remembered his words in after-life. He told me that he had served his time as a man-of-war's man, and would do it again if he were a boy. "It's a fine life," he said, "but hard, sometimes very hard."

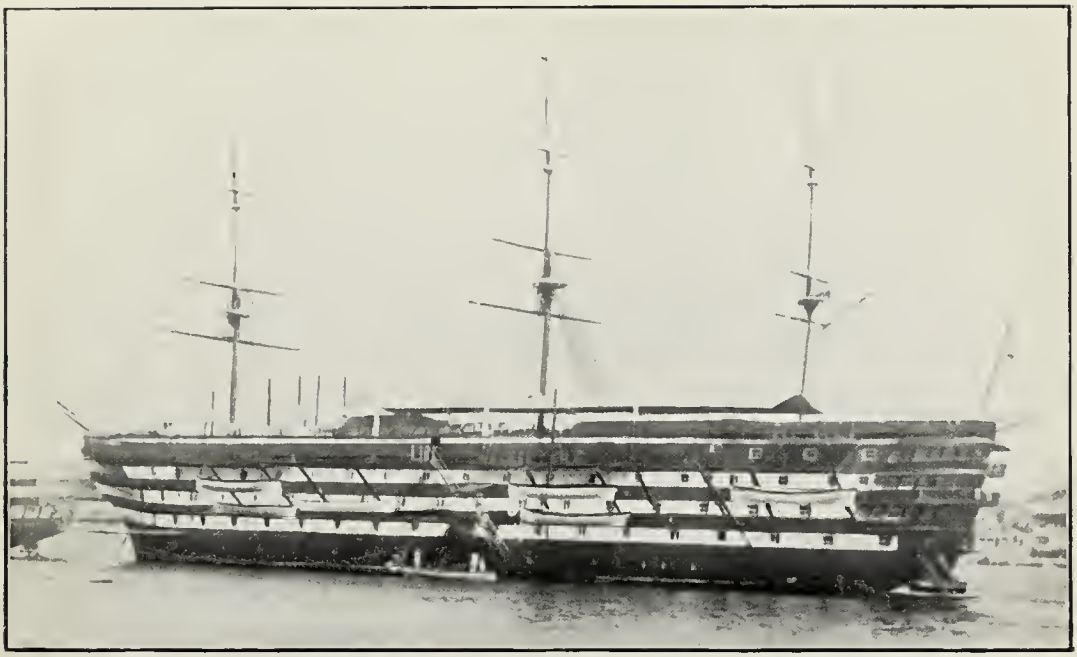
The old waterman's words bucked me up, and put me in good spirits. He having brought his boat alongside, I jumped in, and on the journey over he told me some wonderful stories of the Navy. I listened most intently, at the same time gazing with wonder at the two ships as we approached them.

He explained that both the *Royal Adelaide*, which we had just passed, and the *Impregnable*, the training ship, were three-deckers, or ships having three gun-decks to fight their enemies. There were really five decks in these ships. The upper-deck was kept practically clear of guns. The ships in those days being manœuvred by sails only, this deck was kept clear so as to enable the men to work the ship by trimming the yards during an engagement. The decks below the upper deck were known as the main, middle, and lower decks, with the guns on them when the ship was commissioned for service. Below was a deck known as the orlop deck, a part of which was set aside for the Hospital or sick bay, several cabins and store rooms also being on that deck.

When we arrived alongside a staging at the bottom of a wide ladder or stairs, the waterman told me to go through an opening which he pointed out in the side of the ship, wishing me "good-luck" before he shoved off.

I went through the opening, (which I afterwards found was known as the entry port), and was met by a tall man who proved to be a ship's corporal, or ship's policeman. He said to me: "Well, sonny, do you want to join the Navy?" "Yes, sir," I replied, handing him the envelope with the recommendation and declaration.

I was taken by the corporal to the Master-at-Arms, or Chief of Police. The corporal gave him my papers, and, after carefully examining them, I was told to take off my boots and socks, and stand under a small sliding



H.M.S. Impregnable, 1872.
Training ship for boys lying at Devonport.

Face page 4

bar of wood to be measured for my height; I was found to be three-quarters of an inch below the standard.

When I was told "Too short," I felt my heart come up into my mouth. Try as I would, I could not stop the tears coming to my eyes. I was so disappointed that all my efforts to bring myself up to the required height had failed.

The Master-at-Arms, seeing how keenly I felt it, again examined my papers—what was on them I do not know; being so keen on joining I had never looked—and said: "Take off your coat and waistcoat, boy." This I very quickly did. My chest was then measured.

Thanks to the incessant swinging and stretching on the beams of the shed, the Master-at-Arms was surprised, and said, "That boy will do; with his fine chest he will grow to be a fine man."

I was then taken to the sick-bay, where I was medically examined and found to be sound and fit. The corporal took me back to the Master-at-Arms with the doctor's report; I was told I was passed into the Royal Navy as a second-class boy on October 11th, 1872.

I had to sign a form stating I would serve for a period of ten years after arriving at the age of eighteen years. This I did with much pleasure, thanking the Master-at-Arms for his kindness in giving me the chance he did when I was found to be too short.

In looking back after so many years, the main thing which comes to my mind was the kindness and encouragement I received when joining as a sailor boy.

A very good dinner was provided for me in the mess next to the entry port, where I had to report myself when the boys were called to instruction. Two of the boys in the mess offered to show me around the ship after dinner. I was glad, as I wanted to see something of my future home, and to see those decks which the old waterman had told me so much about while I was in his boat.

I can assure you I was a bit scared at first, at all the bustle and noise, and at the size and vastness of the decks, no matter which way one looked.

The boys were kind enough to show me around all the decks in turn, and explain everything of interest to me. I was greatly taken up with the guns and rifles, and I wonder now if it was intuition that caused me to take more interest and ask more questions about them than I did about any other thing I was shown in our brief run around? I think so; because I held the ratings of chief and first class gunnery instructor for nearly eighteen years during my service.

As we were returning to the mess, I could not help noticing how tidy all looked; everything was washed up and cleared away. Some of the boys were playing, others were sitting at their mess tables, with small boxes in front of them, writing letters.

These boxes I was told were their ditty boxes, each boy being served out with one in which to keep his writing materials, letters, photographs, or any little keepsake from his sweetheart. The boxes could be locked, and when not required they were put in racks over the mess tables.

The bugle sounded for Instruction. I thanked the boys for showing me around the ship and reported myself to the corporal. I was told to get into a boat lying alongside the stage, and was rowed to an old hulk painted a yellowish-brown colour. She had a wooden roof covering her upper deck. I was told her name was the *Circe*, a receiving ship for new entries for the training ships, the *Impregnable*, *Lion* and *Implacable*, at Devonport, and the *Ganges* at Falmouth.

A boy could choose his own training ship, selecting generally the one nearest his home. When I got on board I was met by a corporal of marines who detailed a first-class boy to fix me up. I was given a hammock, bed and blanket, and shown how to hang it up. Boys

have great fun in trying to get into their hammocks the first time. Some experience great difficulty, causing roars of laughter in their efforts to go to bed. Some practical joker would shout out, "Why don't you go on deck and get your hammock ladder?" They all get over the difficulty in time; the knack was, to swing yourself up by the two hooks close to the head of your hammock.

While waiting for our clothes, Mr. Ball, the Warrant Officer in charge, saw to it that we were taught many useful bits of knowledge, thus making it easier for us when we arrived at our training ship. He was assisted by a staff of petty officers, marines, and first-class boys, who had completed their training, in fitting out and looking after the new entries until sent to their respective training ships. A week after joining the *Circe*, I was served out with a kit-bag full of clothes for which I was measured on the day I joined, and I must admit to a feeling of pride the first time I put them on. I was taught how to lay it out for inspection, every article of clothing being stamped with the boy's name, a most necessary proceeding where a large number of men and boys are gathered together in a small space such as the mess deck of a ship.

CHAPTER II

THE ROUTINE OF H.M.S. "IMPREGNABLE," 1872–3
A SPARTAN LIFE

THE following day I was sent on board the *Impregnable* to undergo my training, and was put into No. 24 mess; this, my future home, had one long table with a stool each side and a small table in line with the gunport. I had a good look at my messmates, some of whom appeared like men in comparison with me; I was so small.

I soon fell into the routine of how and where to stow my hammock and kit bag, where to fall in for Divisions for Inspection. Leave was granted every Thursday and Sunday afternoon until six o'clock, and needless to say I went ashore the first Sunday on purpose to show my aunt what a fine sailor I made. I also met my old friend the waterman. He was pleased to see me, and said, "Stick it lad; it may be hard at first, but you'll get used to it."

Our pay as Second-class boys was sixpence a day. We received only threepence, or a "Holy Joe," as spending money each week. Should we break a basin or plate, there was no "Holy Joe" that week. The other three shillings and threepence was placed to our credit in the paymaster's books. In consequence, I seldom went ashore, but remained on board roaming about and taking stock of the various things.

I well remember the first Thursday I spent in the *Impregnable*. It being a fine day, the liberty boys had

gone on shore, while I, with other boys, climbed aloft. I went up the fore-rigging, getting up as far as the crosstrees, this being my first attempt at climbing aloft. I stood up on the crosstrees, and holding fast to the rigging, I had a good look round and marvelled at the splendid panorama with the different ships moored in the harbour. It was a glorious sight. Saltash Bridge could be seen quite clearly, the Torpoint Ferry crawling along towards North Corner. The training ships *Lion* and *Implacable* were moored together between Torpoint and Saltash on the Cornish side of the Tamar. Yes, it was grand! As I was about to make my way down again, I saw one of the boys standing on the other side of the mast, shivering and holding on to the rigging like grim death. His eyes seemed to be standing out of his head and he was shaking all over. I saw it was a case of what may be termed "stage fright." I told him not to look down, but to look up at me or in front. I then took hold of his arm in order to steady him a bit and let him recover himself. Most of the other boys having gone down, I said, "Now, you follow me, I'll show you the way." He followed me through the crosstrees on to the topmast rigging; I waited for him there and we both came down to the top, i.e., a platform for setting up the topmast rigging, where I thought it wise to step inside the rigging for a while so as to enable him to pull himself together. I then guided him through the "lubber's hole" into the lower rigging both of us then going down together until we reached the deck. Taking hold of my hand with both of his, he gave it a good shake and said he could not think what had come over him to make him so nervous. He added, "And when I saw a little chap like you looking so cool, it helped me to recover myself." I told him it was only a case of "stage fright," and that he would soon get over it, and would knock spots off me in

going aloft. He told me his name was John Jack, and that he came from Belfast. He had been in the service a couple of months and this was the first time he had been up so high. He was a man in comparison with me. I have often thought of that scene since; both of us standing under the fore-rigging in our white duck suits, he so tall and I so short.

There were no more chances of going aloft, as the awning was spread and the gear made snug aloft for the winter.

I will now endeavour to explain as clearly as I can the routine on the *Impregnable* while I served in her. This varied but slightly from day to day, except Saturday and Sunday, when there was no Instruction. It may not be out of place if I explain how a ship's company is divided for keeping the ship clean and for working the masts and yards. The crew are first formed into parts of the ship, named after the different masts. A number of men or boys are allocated to each part of the ship, these being known as "topmen," and are in charge of petty officers with assistants, who are responsible to the commanding officer for the cleanliness of their particular part of the ship. The men or boys are divided into two watches, odd numbers being star-board watch, even numbers, port watch; each man or boy's number corresponding to his part of the ship; this number is stamped on his hammock and kit-bag. This is the origin of the expression "opposite number." The boys are formed into divisions for inspection under the charge of officers.

Routine:—5.45 a.m. "All hands" are called. Immediately lash up and stow hammocks.

6 a.m. One watch fall in and muster for scrubbing decks. The other watch mustered to go through a cold bath, winter or summer; each boy being inspected to see that he had been through his bath before his name and number were ticked off by the instructor.

The watch on deck were minus boots and socks, with trousers turned up to the knees, scrubbing away at the deck, water being thrown about with buckets. The deck is then washed down with plenty of sea-water squeegeed and dried off with swabs.

6.45 a.m. Breakfast. A basin of ship's cocoa with dry soft bread. This on four days each week; on the other three days we had ship biscuits instead of bread.

7.15 a.m. The watch on deck muster there to clean wood and brass work. The watch below clean their messes, polish messtraps, i.e. tin kettles and dishes, ready for inspection. Two boys in each watch are detailed to be cooks of the mess for the day, every boy taking his turn except the petty officer boys. They are the servants of the mess for the day, and bring all food and provisions from the galley, i.e., the cook-house to the messes, wash up all articles used for meals and prepare the dinner to be given to the ship's cook and staff at the galley.

Dinner was practically the only meal we had for the day. It varied from salt beef from the harness cask, with "figgy dough," seapie, i.e., layers of dough, meat and vegetables tied down and boiled in a large copper, "Schooner on the Rocks," i.e., joint of meat roasted on potatoes, or "toad in the hole." There was no salt provided in those days, so that one had to beg some from the harness-cask, dry it in the oven and pound it up small.

7.45 a.m. Hands to clean, i.e., change from night suits into the rig of the day, generally white duck suits.

7.55 a.m. "Clear Lower Deck." Everyone up for general evolution. "Cross Royal Yards." The yards are crossed at 8 a.m., when the white ensign is hoisted on every ship in the harbour, the National Anthem being played by the bands. Twice a week, if fine, the sails are loosed and hauled to a bowline, after which the bugle sounds "quarters" to clean guns. Cooks of

the messes below to get their messes ready for inspection.

9 a.m. "The Assembly" is sounded for divisions. Boys are then inspected by the officers. After inspection, prayers would be read by the chaplain. Classes would then be marched off for inspection, where they are taught everything required to lay the foundation of a thorough seaman for service on sea-going ships.

11.45 a.m. "Cooks and Caterers" would be sounded on the bugle, these would go below to their messes, get the dinner from the galley, divide it out on the plates in equal shares under the supervision of the instructors. One will hardly credit this fact: that knives and forks were not issued to the boys in those days, only a spoon, known as a "gibby." The only weapon with which to attack their food was the "Purser's Dagger," the knife which sailors wear around their neck with a white lanyard, served out on joining as a part of their uniform. This primitive equipment survived into the twentieth century.

11.55 a.m. Boys assemble at their messes, standing on the outer side of the stools in their regular places. The instructors report "all correct" to the officers of the day. "Still" is then sounded on the bugle and Grace would be said by the boys. At "carry on" being sounded, the boys would turn to, being rather hungry, having had nothing to eat since 6.45 a.m. Hard lines for such growing boys! On finishing his dinner, each boy leaves, and the cooks for the day wash up, and sweep up the Mess.

1 p.m. "The Assembly" would be sounded for Instruction, which lasted until 4 p.m. If the sails had been unfurled in the morning for drying, at 3.45 p.m. they would be furled, and the upper yards sent down. At 4 p.m. the boys had tea, which consisted of a basin of tea served from a copper without any milk, just

as the Chinese drink their tea. To help it down we had a lump of dry bread or biscuit from the Tack Barge. After tea the boys changed their duck suits for night clothing, i.e., serge suit.

5 p.m. Fall in for evening quarters; inspected and then dismissed. The boys had the evening to themselves unless they were detailed for special duty, or it happened to be scrub and wash clothes night. It was a sight to see, hundreds of boys kneeling, with their trousers turned up above their knees, sleeves above their elbows, scrubbing and washing away at their clothes or their hammocks, rinsing them out with plenty of sea-water, wringing them out and hanging them on the clothes line with proper clothes stops—not pegs, ships don't carry them. During the winter this was done in the afternoon.

7 p.m. We had our supper of bread and cheese, and by going to the drinking tank with a basin we could obtain plenty of what the lions drink, to wash it down.

7.30 p.m. "Stand by Hammocks," which are then hung up for sleeping in.

8 p.m. Clear up the mess decks for the "rounds."

8.30 p.m. "Pipe Down," when every boy has to turn into his hammock, to sleep the sleep of the just, which is the end of a perfect day, and a truly Spartan life.

Can you wonder that a sailor is known as the "handy man," after the strenuous training he receives while in the training ship as a youngster, and which continues while he is serving in "Andrew Millar," i.e., the Royal Navy. In looking back after so many years, I feel like the old waterman who first took me on board the *Impregnable*, and I would go through it again if I were a boy, especially under the present altered conditions of service, with improved diet and a first-class boy's pay, which amounts to nearly as much per

day as I received when serving as an able seaman and trained man. With all its drawbacks and hardships, it is a grand life, and a fine way to see the world, as I have done in nearly every part, helping to keep the flag flying.

The next time I went on shore I saw that my aunt was looking as if something serious had happened. I asked her what was the matter. She said, "Patsy, I have made a great mistake." I said, "What is it, aunt?" She then told me that when she made and signed the declaration before the magistrate in order to enable me to join, she had made the mistake of giving my sister Ellen's age for mine!

My sister was born September, 1857, and I was born March, 1859, I have therefore been sailing under my sister's age during the whole time of my service. As I joined on October 11th, 1872, and was born March 9th, 1859, I could only have been thirteen years and seven months old instead of fifteen years and one month. Rather a stiff handicap, having to compete with boys so much older than myself. My aunt said, "What shall we do about it, Patsy?" I said, "We won't say anything, aunt; don't you worry; I know several boys who have given in their wrong age; I know some who have put their age back to join up." In fact I did hear that some of the so-called boys were married, but had left their homes to join. The authorities were not very particular if the candidate was a likely lad, and although at the time I suspected I was not old enough, I said nothing, as I was keen on joining, and took the first chance. I don't think I committed a serious crime.

I told my aunt I had heard that the boys had fourteen days' leave at Christmas. She said: "I wish you could go to Ireland while on your Christmas leave, and visit my mother (my grandmother) as I have not heard from her for a long time."

I said I would find out all about it when I got on board and let her know.

The next time I saw my aunt I told her it was all right. I had applied to be allowed to spend my leave in Ireland, which was granted; we were allowed four days extra for travelling.

When the day arrived, boys travelling by steamer had the afternoon in which to get themselves ready. We were told to put on our duck suits and tie our best clothes, together with a change of underclothing, in our large blue bundle handkerchiefs. The idea was to save our best suits while travelling on the steamer, which proved a very wise precaution. Before leaving the ship we were given our steamer and rail tickets, also ten shillings to pay for any incidental expenses. We were also given a packet of bread and cheese, which came in very useful on the steamer. We left the ship about 6 p.m. as our boat was due to sail at 8 p.m. for Cork. We were there in plenty of time and stood having a yarn about what we were going to do—as is the nature of boys going on leave—when a party of women and girls who lived near my aunt passed by under the glare of the pier lamps. One of them, (who eight years afterwards became my wife) recognising me, said, "Why, here's Patsy Riley." She then took hold of my arm and asked me if I were going across to Ireland. I replied that I was. The girl who had taken hold of my arm dragged me over to the others, and addressing an elderly person, said, "Mrs. Mahoney, Patsy Riley is going across in the same steamer, he will look after Kate." It appeared that a young girl about seventeen years of age was going over to Tralee, Co. Kerry, to stay with her mother's people. Her mother was delighted when she knew there was someone going over with her daughter who could look after her. She turned to me and said, "Patsy, you will look after my Kate, won't you?" "Yes, ma'am," I replied,

"I will do what I can, God help me!" I little knew then what I had to go through on that trip across the Irish Sea. We were ordered on board and then went down to our compartment, somewhere in the forepart of the ship. It was approached by a steep ladder, the only illumination being an oil lamp hung in the middle, which threw out a lurid light like a street lamp in a fog. As all the scuttles were closed, the only ventilation to the compartment was through the open hatch. There was an open space in the centre without tables, and a locker ran round on each side, forming a seat just wide enough to sleep on if the ship were steady. Above the locker there was a wider space forming a sleeping bunk, but quite exposed to everyone using the compartment. Two or three could lie abreast, a board about eight inches high being provided to keep one from rolling off.

The third-class passengers comprised a party of two girls, Miss Mahoney and another girl returning home, also ten sailor boys. Two of these were brothers named Barry; they had been across before on leave, so they knew the ropes. They had also been through their summer training in the brig, so that they had gained their sea legs, which proved a God-send to us on the trip over. They advised us to make ourselves comfortable before getting outside the Breakwater in Plymouth Sound. We fixed up one end of the upper bunk for the two girls. I gave Kate my bundle of clothes to rest her head on as a pillow, and persuaded her to try and get some sleep. We boys then stretched ourselves on the lockers on the other side of the compartment, and tried to do the same.

We had not been outside the Breakwater very long before it came on to blow hard, causing the ship to roll and pitch so much that soon we were all very ill, and it was not long before I was absolutely helpless. Shall I ever forget my first night at sea, in that dark, stuffy

hole, the ship plunging her bows into the sea, and rolling from side to side in a heavy swell, making it very difficult for us to remain on the lockers. The brothers Barry were the only ones who were able to do anything, and they behaved like fathers to us all, attending to the poor girls, who were in an awful state owing to the heavy rolling of the ship. It blew hard all that night and well into the next day, when it eased down considerably, but still left a heavy swell, making it far from comfortable. We arrived at Cork fairly early the second morning.

While steaming up the harbour we left the compartment, so as to enable the girls to smarten themselves up a little after the terribly rough night. We then changed our clothes, ready to land, which we did when the vessel was secured to the quay; and after wishing each other good-bye, we repaired to our different stations.

I arrived at my grandmother's very tired, she was delighted to see her sailor grandson. I spent a happy Christmas with her. Wishing her good-bye, I caught the train for Cork. Meeting the other boys we all went on board the steamer for Plymouth, and enjoyed a much more pleasant trip over. On arriving at Millbay, we made our way to Mutton Cove, Devonport, and engaged a waterman's boat to take us to the *Impregnable* reporting ourselves to the corporal on duty.

The next day we joined our different classes for Instruction. I took the first opportunity of going ashore to tell my aunt all about her mother. She was delighted when I told her that she was settled in a nice little cottage by the roadside, with a garden at the back, and a couple of pigs to pay the rent.

The same routine continued on board from day to day. There was a spare yard fitted up under the awning, where the new boys were exercised in loosing and furling sails, unbending and bending the sail to

the yard, preparing us for the real thing in the summer months when general evolutions of working sails, mast and yards are held, usually on Mondays in the forenoon.

On the last day of February, 1873, the news went round that a new ship was to be launched from one of the dockyard slips. It was the custom whenever such an event took place to make it a red letter day for the boys in the training ships. All instruction was closed down and everything packed away on that part of the day that the launch took place. We were all on the tiptoe of expectancy at divisions the next morning, waiting for the news to be confirmed. After prayers, the Commander informed the ship's company that a vessel was to be launched that forenoon and was to be christened H.M.S. *Amethyst*, and that he hoped the boys would give her a good loud cheer as she took the water, remarking also: "After you are dismissed, you can take up a position anywhere aloft." The bugle then sounded the "dismiss" and the boys scattered around, yarning until 10 a.m., when the order was given to "man the rigging." My old friend Jack and I secured a position in the starboard fore-rigging on the sheerpole, where we had a splendid view. The band was formed up with music stands on the poop; there was also a guard of honour and band formed up on the poop of the *Royal Adelaide*. After waiting about fifteen minutes, with everyone looking in the direction of one of the sheds—the front of which had been removed—we saw a ship coming out stern first. The bands were playing "Rule Britannia" followed by "A Life on the Ocean Wave." The boys hung on to the rigging with one hand, waved their caps with the other and cheered as loudly as they could. It was a grand sight for us youngsters to see the ship come gracefully on, with flags fluttering in the breeze. She appeared from where we were

H.M.S. Impregnable 1873
Boys at sail drill

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standing to take the water like a duck. The dock-yard tugs, which were standing by like watch-dogs, steamed towards her, and as she lost way, passed their towing hawsers aboard and towed her up the harbour under the Sheerlegs in the South Yard.

Coming events cast their shadows before! When watching some important event taking place, have you ever felt that what you have just seen will have some bearing on your future?

I said to the boy who was with me in the rigging, "That is the ship I should like to go to sea in." Little did I think that one year and four months afterwards I should be drafted to her, and that I should spend four years of my life in her.

CHAPTER III

MY CRUISE IN H.M. TRAINING BRIG "SQUIRREL"

TIME was on the wing, we were now well into the summer months, the monotony of winter instructions being changed to the excitements of general "sail drills" aloft; running up and down the rigging full pelt in order to loose or furl sails, seeing how fast we could tread a ratline, many of us having sore shins after a day's drill on account of our feet slipping. Then we had boat drills, learning how to handle an oar without catching a crab. We were also taught to swim, all of which added to our store of knowledge.

About the middle of July, I was drafted with a batch of other boys to H.M. Training Brig *Squirrel*. She was one of the five brigs I used to spend so many happy hours watching with longing eyes from the Hoe.

Our draft was towed in a launch to the brigs moored inside Drake's Island. It caused a bit of commotion getting on board with our baggage, for we all had our kit bags and hammocks. We fell in and were told the number of our mess, which part of the ship, the number on the watch bill, our gun and number at it, and then dismissed to find our messes.

The hands were piped to fall in on the upper deck in their own parts of the ship—I was a maintop boy. The captain (a petty officer) of each top mustered his own boys by his watch bill—or list of names—taking stock of our features as we answered, in case we strayed

to some other fold. He was assisted by the leading hands in his part of the ship.

The routine of cleaning ship was the same as in the big one, all hands turning out at 5.30 a.m. for scrubbing decks.

We left the mooring buoy under sail for our first trip at 8 a.m. After getting outside the breakwater we sailed along the Cornish coast. It was a lovely day, with a gentle breeze blowing, just strong enough to drive the *Squirrel* along at about five knots. We carried out several exercises of working ship under sail. The petty officers and seamen who formed the ship's company put us through our facings, the boys running to man the different ropes in their bare feet, which could be heard pattering on the deck like the feet of a flock of sheep on a hard road.

The weather being fine, it was grand exercise and a pleasure tacking, or going "about ship," that is, working the ship up against the wind zig-zag fashion, making long or short tacks as required. The following orders came from the Commanding Officer: "About ship," "Ready all," "Ease the helm down," "Haul over the spanker boom," when the helm is a-lee; "Let go head and fore sheets," "Raise tacks and sheets," "Haul taut main braces," swing the after yards by the order "Mainsail haul," "Shift over the head sheets"; when past the wind: "Let go the head braces"; swing the head yards by the order "Of all haul," bracing sharp up "Right the helm," "Brace up mainyard, weather braces lifts and trusses," "Haul bowlines," and away she goes like a duck to the other side of the road. Boxing the ship about in fine weather is very nice; but it is quite a different thing when it is blowing and raining hard, especially at night when you cannot see your hand before your face. One gets used to it in time, it is like a dose of medicine, bound to do you good in the long run.

Memories of a Blue-jacket

I was fortunate to serve in three square-rigged ships, besides the training ship and brig, during my career in the Service. Some men never liked them, but I loved sailing ships, and was always as happy in them as the birds in May.

We continued these exercises every day, for one week, returning to our moorings each evening.

Then four other brigs joined the *Squirrel*, making quite a little fleet moored in a line. The ships that joined us were H.M. Brigs *Martin*, *Seaflower*, *Sealark*, and *Liberty*.

Our captain, Lieutenant Ryder, was the senior officer. He was a fine, upstanding and handsome man, a thorough gentleman in his actions and manners to us youngsters. I do not think it would be possible to select a better officer to take charge of the training brigs.

Our first long trip was to Portland. We left our buoys under sail about 11 a.m. The fleet of brigs, with all sails set, worked their way around the east of Drake's Island, making a fine picture from the Hoe, and after clearing the Island, the wind being easterly, we had a fine run out between the Breakwater and Penlee Point.

It was a grand sight looking at the Hoe, with its green sward shining in the sun, and on our right the heights of Mount Edgcumbe and Cawsand Bay with its little village.

On our left were Mount Batten, Stadden and Bovisand Heights; the Breakwater, nearly a mile long, like a ribbon on the face of the water, running from east to west; the lighthouse on the west end and a large beacon for shipwrecked sailors on the east.

As we sailed away from Drake's Island we could see thousands of people on the Hoe watching us. The thoughts of some of them while gazing at us may have wandered back to another July morning in the year

H.M. Training Brigs Squirrel and Liberty
Working their way around Drake's Island

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Cruise in H.M. "Squirrel"

1588, when a group of our most famous sea captains were gathered on the Hoe playing that never-to-be-forgotten game of bowls, when everyone's attention was attracted by the sight of that little Scotch privateer running in under full sail to spread the news that he had seen the great Spanish Armada early that morning off the Cornish coast. The news caused so much excitement that the sea captains were about to leave the game and repair to their ships, when Sir Francis Drake coolly insisted on playing out the game. The spectators on the Hoe, watching our little fleet sailing away, may have thought we were worthy successors to those gallant seamen of by-gone days, who did their best to harass the Spaniards on the run up Channel, in the end playing havoc with their fleet at Gravelines.

With a good, strong breeze the brigs could cover the distance from Plymouth to Portland in a single day's run. We spent three days and nights doing it, because the boys, like young colts, had to be broken in; sampling what it was like, keeping watch on deck and working the ship by night at sea. The two watches relieved each other every four hours. It was rather warm work for young lads, some of whom had never left their mother's apron strings before they joined the Navy, especially as we had been engaged with some instruction or other during the day. I thought one of our most serious and practical items of instruction was learning how to heave the lead and pick up soundings as the brig went through the water. It was very amusing, and great fun to see how some of the boys—myself included—shaped in trying to throw the lead. Through nervousness, they would check the lead in its swing, and down it would come around their legs with a jerk, frightening the life out of them, until they got used to the swing and learned to let go at the right moment so as to send it flying forward, carrying the line with

it. This exercise was carried out from a platform known as the "chains." Whenever a ship is leaving or entering a port leadsmen are in the chains, calling out in a loud voice the depth of water to the officer in charge of the bridge. The line is marked with pieces of leather, and red, white, and blue bunting, and every sailor boy has to learn how to sing off the marks and depths of a leadline like a song. It takes an expert to pick up soundings in a fast-moving ship.

On arriving at Portland we anchored inside the new Breakwater. While lying there, we all did plenty of boat pulling, and the racing crews were selected for the regatta to be held during the following week at the old-fashioned town of Dartmouth.

At the end of July we weighed anchor and left Portland, sailing in single line ahead until we passed Portland Bill, when the brigs formed into two lines, the *Squirrel* leading the weather line nearest the shore. There was a fresh breeze blowing from the north-east, just off our starboard quarter, and with every stitch of canvas set and with every sail drawing well, we were spinning along, reminding one of that pretty song:

"White wings, they never grow weary,
They carry you merrily over the Sea."

The little fleet looked grand, skimming along like birds on the foam of a stream, and it being a clear day, with the sun shining on the high cliffs away in the distance, we had a most enjoyable run down. After divisions the watch was called, and as it was a fair wind we had nothing to do but to admire the scenery. We were about twelve miles off the shore, and the sun shining brightly, we could make out the different headlands, towns and villages as we sailed by. You must remember that Devon is, and always has been, one of the best nurseries for supplying the Royal Navy with

its sons, therefore we had several boys amongst our crowd who knew, or thought they knew, all about the coast, and this led to many arguments. The captain of our part of the ship, seeing that our group was a bit excited, came over to us to settle the arguments and, as he belonged to Sidmouth, he was able to point out the places of interest.

Away off our starboard quarter lay Lyme Regis with its white cliffs showing up; nearer was Seaton, and a very high headland to its left was Beer Head—we could just make out the little fishing village of Beer with its scattered cottages. He pointed out a range of high cliffs stretching away to Branscombe. The sun would throw a glare of light at intervals on the cliffs, showing up several green patches, and we were told that the people of Branscombe grew potatoes earlier than any other part of England, growing them in the patches of soil on the side of the high hills, where they get the full benefit of the sun and are sheltered from the north-east wind. The next place he pointed out was Sidmouth, where his own little cottage stood, and where his wife and two children were waiting for him to come home after the summer cruises were over, and the brigs laid up.

Sidmouth lay between two very high hills, the highest to the west being known as High Peak. As we passed Budleigh Salterton, he pointed out Straight Point at the mouth of the River Exe; from there the land fell away, showing a wide expanse of water with the heights of Haldon in the distance. This was where the boys from that district came into their own, and they were most eager to point out the places of interest to us: the tors on Dartmoor, especially, showing up behind the hills at the back of Dawlish and Teignmouth. Sailing by Torbay, we could see Torquay nestled on its north shore, and Paignton and Brixham as we passed Berry Head.

Memories of a Blue-jacket

Approaching Dartmouth, the brigs formed in single line ahead to enter the narrow entrance to the harbour. Taking in our upper sails after getting inside, the whole squadron anchored in a line, close to the *Britannia* training ship for cadets, the future captains and admirals of the Navy.

The sails were furled, the yards squared, and all ropes hauled taut, after which it soon became dark; all the lights on shore and the anchor lights on the vessels apparently competed in their brilliance with the stars above.

After "stand by hammocks," most of us turned in, so that when the boatswain's mate boy piped down there were very few on deck.

We were up again the next morning at 5.30, carrying out the usual routine of cleaning ship. During the half-hour we were allowed for breakfast I went on to the fo'c'sle and had a good look around. A most beautiful sea and landscape met my gaze, the narrow entrance to the harbour, with very high hills on either side closing around a large expanse of water, where many ships could find shelter.

A Royal regatta is held there every year; the harbour being then crowded with yachts, large and small, of every description, the old *Britannia* towering above them all, and the five training brigs completing the picture. Numerous little dinghys were moving as busy as bees between the yachts and the shore, no doubt bringing off provisions for the day.

After divisions we were dismissed, and had a glorious time, racing of all kinds being the order of the day. The large yachts, with their sail ballooning out, cutting through the water towards the entrance, then outside, smaller yachts racing around mark-buoys placed up the river; rowing races by crews from the brigs; races by the young officers from the *Britannia*; also racing amongst the small boats of the yachts; in fact, every

kind of sport that could be carried out on the water was in full swing, making it a most enjoyable day. When it became dark, fireworks were let off from the yachts, which seemed to vie with each other in trying to make the finest show. The harbour and town became ablaze with illuminations of various coloured lights, and the whole scene had a fascination for us youngsters, making it very hard for us to go below and turn in.

The fun was carried on for three days and nights. The yachts then began to leave, I suppose making their way to the port where the next regatta was to be held. I should think it was great sport for the yachtsmen, sailing along the coast and competing at the various regattas.

The brigs remained for a whole week, and then dispersed for their home ports. Twice we were given leave until 6 p.m. while lying here, one watch going on shore on Sunday afternoon, and the other watch, of which I was one, on the Thursday afternoon.

On arriving on shore, four of us stuck together and decided to go out into the country. After walking several miles, and playing about, having great fun with each other, we were feeling a bit tired, so we rested on a low ledge. Our feet seemed to be very sore, and on taking off our shoes and socks we found that the soles of our feet had little grooves where our shoes had pinched the bottom of our feet. I suppose the fact of not wearing shoes on board—as we always went about our work bare-footed—together with our long walk, had caused our feet to spread. No wonder sailors are nick-named "Flatfoots!" Putting on our shoes and socks again we sat on that hedge cracking jokes with each other, as boys will do, and have done back through the ages.

While sitting there, one of the four spotted a field a little to our right, with the same kind of fruit on its trees that tempted Mother Eve! We looked at each other, then at the lovely fruit on the trees. One boy ran up the lane, perched himself on a high hedge to

survey the surrounding country, and to give warning if need be. The temptation was so great that we fell. We were in that field in double-quick time, gathered around the tree which we thought had the ripest fruit, gave it a good shaking, and quickly filled our "serge frocks"—which are worn tucked inside our trousers—with the fallen fruit, picking off a few nice-looking ones from other trees; we then left without doing any other damage. We called in our "look-out" who had been admiring the beautiful landscape, and, repairing to an adjacent wood, sat down and enjoyed a lovely feed. Youngsters between the age of fifteen and sixteen years have a wonderful appetite for apples; it is really surprising what they can dispose of in a short time.

All boys know it is wrong to steal the farmer's apples, but it is looked upon as sport. It was known in Devonshire as "scrumping," and whoever "scrumped" was prepared to put up with the consequences, if caught! What else could one expect? We boys were only paid three-pence per week, and "bang went three-pence" if we bought a bun!

Returning to the place where we had landed, we jumped into the waiting boat, and were rowed off to the brig. When we arrived alongside we were ordered to take off our shoes and socks so as to avoid our dirty shoes marking the deck. We took them off, tying the laces together, slung the shoes around our neck, and climbed aboard, pulling ourselves up by the "man-ropes."

After inspection, we went below to change our clothing. About 7 p.m. there was an awful hullabaloo. A big farmer came on board and complained to the officer that some sailor boys had broken into his orchard and had done a lot of damage to his trees.

The officer thereupon told the bosun's mate to pipe "clear lower decks"—every soul on deck. We fell in and were searched, while the ship's corporal and

some petty officers went below and searched all the lockers.

While the searchers were below, a lot of whispering went on amongst the boys. I heard one boy whisper rather loudly, " Why don't they make that old farmer take off his dirty old boots? He would then know something of what we have to go through."

The searchers brought up a large mess kettle full of apples. The boys in whose lockers they were found were marched across the deck. You should have heard the excuses they made! Talk about old granny dying and leaving them a fortune! Money seemed to have dropped into their pockets like manna from heaven. At last the officer picked out four to be brought before the captain on the morrow. The old farmer seemed satisfied and left the ship, carrying with him a few prayers from the boys who had been found out. There were no apples in my locker. You see, I had a splendid appetite for a boy of my age!

The four culprits were brought before the captain and were sentenced to six cuts with the cane. They took their medicine like bricks.

Our ship's corporal was John Lightfoot; but if his feet were light his hands and arms were not so! He could lay it on, calling out each stroke, " one," " two," and so on; just like Big Ben striking the hour. It was a good job the racing was over, as two of them belonged to the racing crew, fine, strapping lads and difficult to replace.

CHAPTER IV

THE OPENING OF HOLYHEAD BREAKWATER, AUGUST 19TH, 1873, BY HIS LATE MAJESTY, KING EDWARD VII, WHEN PRINCE OF WALES

MANY times since when calling at Dartmouth the whole scene has come back to me; the pleasant times we had, and the narrow escape I had of feeling the full strength of Corporal Lightfoot's arm.

During the last few days of our stay at Dartmouth the wind had veered around to the south-west, and was blowing fairly fresh, making it difficult to "beat" out of the harbour. After getting outside we had to make several tacks to clear Start Point on our way to Plymouth. Clearing the Start and Bolt Head, we shaped our course to Penlee Point, arriving at our buoy at 6 p.m.

We remained at Plymouth until August 12th, when our Captain received orders to proceed to Holyhead in order to take part at the opening ceremony of the new Breakwater there. The wind was still blowing very hard from the south-west, when we slipped our buoy behind Drake's Island at 1 p.m. We had to tack ship several times to get outside the breakwater. The wind increased to a gale as the day advanced, so that our upper spars had to be sent down from aloft and two reefs taken in the top-sails to make the brig as snug as possible for the night. We experienced terrible weather for two days and nights, working the brig against the wind to clear the Lizard and the Wolf Rock.

Holyhead Breakwater

Instead of going between the Wolf and Land's End, our Captain worked his ship out around the Wolf, pass ing between it and the Seven Stones Lighthouse, then altering our course to clear Land's End, which brought the wind abaft the beam, making it much easier to work the ship.

Our captain rarely left the ship until we were round Land's End, it was a very trying ordeal for him, and we youngsters were being broken in with a vengeance, being frequently called out of our hammocks, during our watch below at night, to put the ship about.

Some of the boys were quite helpless, and not able to stand on their feet, owing to the motion of the brig, let alone pulling much weight on the ropes, in fact most of us were feeling very qualmish.

We were experiencing another side of the picture to that which we had known on our trip to Portland and Dartmouth. Passing Land's End we shaped our course for the "Smalls," and as the wind had eased down considerably, reefs were shaken out of the topsails, t'gallant masts fidded, upper yards crossed and lower sails set.

I need not tell you what a relief it was to everyone on board when the wind died down to a gentle breeze. We poor little kiddies were looking as white as ghosts and as limp as a wet rag, feeling very sore from the knocking about we had experienced during those awful nights with hardly any sleep. It really is astonishing how quickly youngsters forget their troubles and regain their frolicsome spirit. That evening they were sky-larking about as if they had just been on a pleasure trip, instead of the trying time they had been through.

We were now enjoying our run across the mouth of the Bristol Channel, after passing St. David's Head, we crossed Cardigan Bay and made for Holyhead, arriving there August 15th.

Memories of a Blue-jacket

The *Squirrel* anchored about four hundred yards off the breakwater; four other brigs joined us during the day, anchoring in a straight line with the *Squirrel* and parallel with the breakwater.

The next day the Channel squadron arrived. H.M.S. *Agincourt*, flagship of Rear-Admiral C. T. Phipps Hornby, H.M.S. *Hercules*, *Devastation*, *Northumberland*, and *Sultan*, with five training brigs, *Squirrel*, *Liberty*, *Martin*, *Seaflower*, and *Sealark*. Quite a " Grand Fleet " of old times! During the early part of the forenoon of August 19th, we were fitting life-lines to the different yards. These were secured to the " lifts " of the yards and were brought into the bunt of the yards breast-high for the boys to lean their backs against for support. At 10 a.m. we went below to dress ourselves in our best bib and tucker, as H.R.H. the Prince of Wales (the late King Edward VII) was going to perform the opening ceremony.

When the signal to " man yards " was hoisted, we had to run aloft and spread ourselves along the different yards, and stand up with our bare feet resting on an iron jackstay, facing forward, and with our arms stretched along the life line, which came just below our shoulder blades, which was not a very pleasant position for any boy who happened to be nervous, especially those on the upper yards. I was on the main-top sail yard. As we were bare-footed, we could stick our toes into the sails.

No doubt it was a grand sight to the people on shore when the signal was hoisted to see hundreds of men and boys running up the rigging like a lot of monkeys, and spreading themselves out on the yards.

It was blowing a fresh breeze right off the breakwater, and strong enough to blow the ships bows-on to it; in fact, at times there was quite a cold nip in the air.

We had been aloft about twenty minutes, when away on our port bow we could see coming directly towards

us an open carriage, drawn by a pair of prancing horses, and containing His Royal Highness, and right glad we were to see him; for our fingers and toes were getting rather numb, and we were not sorry when " pipe down " from aloft was given.

We remained at Holyhead for several days, the officers of the Fleet, no doubt, enjoying the festivities provided by the townspeople for the occasion.

Our next trip was rather a long one, but was much more pleasant than the trip to Holyhead. We made our way to Portland, putting the finishing touches to our sea training, and remained there three days before setting sail for our " home port," Plymouth.

Our period of training in the brigs was drawing to a close; having sampled a mixture of rough and smooth weather, visited several interesting places, and gained an experience which seldom falls to the lot of a boy of my age.

Arriving safely at our buoy inside Drake's Island, we were relieved the next day by another draft of boys who were to undergo their training, while we returned once more to the old *Impregnable*, one of the wooden walls of England.

I see by my parchment certificate that I was rated a First Class Boy, October 29th, 1873, just over twelve months from the day I joined the Royal Navy. What a grand increase of pay I received on my promotion! My salary was increased by one penny per day; four shillings and a penny per week, out of which large sum one had to provide oneself with clothing. It was an incentive to make a " navy man " very careful of his clothes for the remainder of his life.

When Christmas time came round again I spent my fourteen days' leave with my aunt at Plymouth.

On January 14th, 1874, I was drafted with one hundred other boys from the *Impregnable* to undergo a course of gunnery in the *Foudroyant*. She was attached

to H.M.S. *Cambridge*, the Gunnery School for the Western Divisions, at Devonport.

We were joined by drafts from the other training ships, the *Implacable*, *Lion* and *Ganges*.

Classes were formed with twenty boys to each class; the boys from each ship were classed together, which tended to create a spirit of emulation between the boys from different ships, and caused them to vie with each other in the Class examinations.

A certain number of days were allocated to the different courses of Instruction—heavy gun drill, field exercises, musketry, field gun drill, cutlass and pistol. We were examined in each of these by an officer before being passed on to another.

With the exception of heavy gun drill, all instruction was carried out on shore, in a field at Trevol, near Torpoint. The classes left the ship in large rowing boats at 8 a.m., with their instructors, who were supplied from the *Cambridge*, taking with them their provisions for dinner.

On arriving at the field we disembarked and marched up to the drill sheds, where we were dismissed until 9 a.m. It was " all hands in " to prepare the vegetables, the cooks of the class giving it to the cook of the field, who took charge of all dinners from the classes of about three to four hundred men and boys, who came to the field every day to drill. He was an old chief gunnery instructor, who lived with his wife in a small house at the field. He had a nicely fitted up cook house, with a long range and ovens, and plenty of hot water. It was considered a snug job for a man and his wife. A nice little picking could be made out of it.

As our menu generally consisted of potatoes and meat, the cook, taking a portion of our meat, with the assistance of his wife could make up appetising dinners by adding a few extra vegetables and dough-boys, which more than satisfied everyone concerned. It

is all changed now though, and has been for many years.

It was quite a treat to us boys, just like a picnic party, with our tin plates and basins, our " purser's daggers " being used to tackle it. We were always ready for our dinner, especially after running about the field at instruction all the forenoon, with our inside lined only with a basin of cocoa and the dry bread or biscuit we had had for breakfast!

At 1 p.m., we closed up at the double for instruction, which continued until 3.30, when we packed up, returning on board. After our usual tea we had the evening to ourselves, very little duty being carried out.

I was told that the *Foudroyant* was a line-of-battle ship which took part in the battle of Trafalgar. She had no masts, but was fitted up entirely for gunnery instructions, and was covered in with an awning, the upper deck being clear so that the boys could be drilled on it should it be too rough for the classes to land at the field.

The messes were on the main-deck, the bathroom on the same deck, port side forward. Although we were there in the months of January, February and March, we had to go through that awful cold bath every morning except Saturdays and Sundays—for which days we used to pray! It was cold enough to freeze one's toes, leave alone anything else!

The lower deck was the gun deck, with heavy guns, from 9-inch m.l.r. (muzzle loading rifled) to 64-pounders, mounted on iron carriages, with slides travelling on rollers around a racer. To me the gun deck looked most formidable, with such a display of big guns on each side, causing me to think what an uproar there must be during an engagement, when they would all be fired at or about the same moment. A great deal of my spare time was spent in the schoolroom on the afterpart of the upper deck, where we could have

books to read. I used to get close to the windows in the stern of the ship where there was a kind of quarter gallery running right around the stern; here I would fix myself, and spend my time in reading.

On the whole, I preferred the three months I spent in the *Foudroyant* to the time I had spent in the *Impregnable*. I seemed to be more in my element with gunnery instruction, although I liked the seamanship part of my training very much, and took a keen interest in it.

I must admit that being only a boy, there was a greater inducement to make each of us like the old *Foudroyant*. It was what happened when on our first pay-day, which without a doubt, was the surprise of our life. Instead of the humble " holy joe " which we were accustomed to receive each week, we were given a lovely two-shilling piece, just half our full pay for the week. What joy! Millionaires at once!

A bumboat woman, named Mrs. Rocket, was allowed to come on board during the dinner hour, and place her wares out for sale on the mess deck.

She brought buns, cakes, fruits and, in fact, every kind of dainty in the eatable line, all calculated to tempt the appetite of a boy with money burning in his pocket. It was a regular tuck shop. Before she unpacked her wares the assistants always roped off a space about six feet clear, and well out of the boys' reach.

Mrs. Rocket used to fetch a chair for herself from the gunners' cabin. I can remember her as a buxom little, dark woman, with rosy cheeks. She usually sat in the centre of her wares, as keen as mustard, taking in the money, and giving change to her two assistants, who were kept busy serving out the goods to the clamorous boys. It was hot work for the first ten minutes.

When our money was gone, Mrs. Rocket would allow us to have " tick," entering our names and numbers in a book, to be paid on the following pay day. Should

a boy be backward in settling, the old gunner would see to it that he paid up.

As we were all first class boys who had completed our training in seamanship, we were borne on the books of H.M.S. *Cambridge* during the three months that we were under gunnery training, under the command of the captain of the *Cambridge*.

A warrant officer, a gunner, was in charge of the ship after instruction; he also regulated the classes, but a gunnery lieutenant from the *Cambridge* used to pay frequent visits during the day, and he would also inspect the boys at divisions every Sunday. The captain of the *Cambridge* would inspect the boys and the ship every fortnight.

The majority of the boys were between the age of sixteen and a half and seventeen and a half years, some of them being nearly eighteen years old. Well, everyone knows what boys are at that age! They are on the borderland of manhood and require careful handling. They are just beginning to feel their feet! Those who were with me in the *Foudroyant* were generally up to some mischief or other when not under instruction.

Most of the old two or three-deckers had a long ladder fixed outside the forepart of the ship, and extending from the upper deck to a staging where boats could make fast to load or unload. It was generally used by large parties of men or boys, such as the classes going to or returning from shore, also for taking in provisions or stores. The *Foudroyant* had one, with wooden rails, or " bannisters," quite close to the ship's side, so that a boy could easily step out of a lower deck gun-port on to the ladder, and run on deck.

No instruction was carried out on Saturdays, the whole morning being given up to scrubbing decks, cleaning guns and brass work, generally finishing about 11.30 a.m., and then everyone would take things easy until dinner, which was at noon.

Now the men who had to bring Mrs. Rocket on board had to bring all the stuff up the steep ladder from the staging to the upper deck. This fact some of the boys must have noticed; especially so as the cakes and buns were brought up the ladder in conveniently sized wooden boxes. Accordingly, several of them got together and laid their plans to make a raid on the boxes containing the buns as they were being brought on board on a Saturday, when it was quiet on the lower deck—from where the attack would be launched. I think it was the second or third Saturday in March, as we returned to our respective training ships shortly afterwards.

They foregathered on the lower part of the lower deck, rove the port lanyards to secure the port when lowered, one boy standing by the port tackle fall ready to let go, a running bowline or loop being made with a length of two-inch rope.

The boy who was to do the trick took the lasso with him and got in the port hole in line with the ladder, pretending to clean the gun. They were all watching the bumboat come alongside and saw Mrs. Rocket get out and slowly ascend the ladder, the boy with the lasso keeping his eye on her, the men in the boat meanwhile putting the boxes on the stage. One of them hoisted the box on his back, holding the becket with one hand over his head. Naturally he was bending down so as to make a flatter rest for the box on his shoulders, his other hand being used to assist himself up the ladder. Can't you see him in your mind's eye? I can; struggling up that ladder! When he got abreast of the gunport the lasso was around the box in a jiffy, and it was dragged off his back and inside, the port lowered and secured before one could say "Jack Robinson." The man who had been carrying the box was outside on the ladder quite dazed, wondering what had happened, it was done so quickly. He shouted to

his mate in the boat, " Did you see that, Bill?" Someone has pulled that box of buns off my back." His mate, using some very choice language, told him to run and report it to Mrs. Rocket. He ran up the ladder and down on to the mess deck, where he was told Mrs. Rocket was aft in the gunner's cabin, so he ran aft and reported the case to her.

My goodness! You should have seen how that old gunner rushed out of his cabin, shouting to the bugler to sound the " assembly." The bo'sun's mate boy piped " clear lower deck, everyone on the quarter deck; " he wasted no time in rushing around.

We all fell in and were searched; the raiders had had plenty of time to clear that box of its contents, stowing some of the buns in the muzzles of the guns, behind the tampions. The ammunition room was open, so some were stowed away there, in fact, they were hidden in all sorts of places. They then rushed up on deck and fell in with the remainder, looking as innocent as lambs!

As none of the buns were found, the gunner kept us all " fallen in " until dinner, and again the whole afternoon. He was in an awful rage about it!

It might be as well to mention here, that one of the conditions of the agreement with Mrs. Rocket as regards her being allowed to come aboard, was that she had to supply the boys' messes with salt and cleaning gear for the mess traps, which for some reason she just pleased herself about doing.

Boys had complained to their instructors about it, without any notice being taken of their complaints, which fact caused a certain amount of resentment against Mrs. Rocket—hence the raid.

CHAPTER V

WAITING FOR DRAFT

I SEE by my " papers " that I returned to the *Impregnable* on March 31st, 1874, having completed another stage towards the fulfilment of my desire to see the world.

When we arrived on board, and were mustered, I and eleven other boys were lucky enough to be selected for the old *Circe*, to await draft. The greatest number of the boys who came from the *Foudroyant* were sent to the *Royal Adelaide*, the depôt ship, to wait their turn for draft.

I boarded the old *Circe* with a different feeling from that experienced when I joined her just over a year and a half earlier. At that time I felt nervous and strange, not knowing what was before me, and was naturally anxious about the future. This time I stepped on board with my kit bag and hammock in a far more buoyant spirit. I was a fully-fledged sailor-boy who had learned the ropes.

We were sent to the *Circe* to assist the officer in charge, Mr. Ball, and his petty officers, in fitting out the new entries, and putting them into shape. Everything on the upper deck seemed very familiar to me, especially Mr. Ball, with his kindly face, and the petty officers grouped around him.

After we were all aboard and had fallen in, we were detailed off for our several duties. Mr. Ball recognised me again as the " small boy "—I had considerably

improved in physique, but was still rather small in comparison with the other boys. I was detailed to assist Ship's Corporal Shedd, who had charge of the fitting out of the new entries. The forepart of the orlop deck was set aside for him to carry out his work.

A long table was fixed up on which to lay the boys' kit to be marked. My job was to fold the clothes with the part to be marked uppermost, ready for the Corporal to dab the type down. Each boy was supplied with over thirty different articles of clothing in suits, all to be marked with their name, also bed and blanket.

After a few weeks I became quite an expert, standing inside the table, Corporal Shedd at the end with the marking paint and type, I passing each piece of clothing to him in turn, then placing it on another table, nearer the ship's side, to dry. I think it was about the middle of May, 1874, and we were having a very busy time getting a rather large batch of clothing ready. I had laid out several kits the other side of the deck ready for the boys to be fitted, and we were well on the way to another lot, when Commander George B. Evans, of the *Impregnable*, whose signature is the first on my parchment certificate, assessing my conduct and abilities for the year 1873 as "very good"—arrived with some ladies. It was interesting for them, who had presumably come to have a look round the ship, to see the neat way that sailors were taught to lay out their clothing for inspection; blue clothes one side, white on the other, all folded up with the name showing. There were three ladies with the commander; one of them, I believe, was Mrs. Evans, while the other two were young girls.

After looking at the clothes, they came over and stood near the table watching our method of marking. Boy-like, I looked up from my work, and saw that one of the young ladies was a very pretty girl of about fifteen years of age. I noticed that she had lovely blue eyes, long, fair hair, and a smile on her pretty face. A

few minutes afterwards she took the Commander's arm and whispered something to him. He looked at me and said, "Come here, boy." I was soon outside, saluted, and stood to attention. I could not help glancing towards the young lady—who, I thought, had, a twinkle in her eye. Commander Evans then asked me how long I had been in the Navy. I replied "one year and seven months, sir." He told me it was time I was away to sea; did I want to go? I said, "Yes, sir, I am anxiously waiting for my turn to come." Commander Evans then said, "Very well, boy, I'll see what I can do for you," and entered my name and number in a little note-book.

I thanked him—also my lucky star—saluted, then returned to my job, feeling sure it was the young lady whom I had to thank for the interest which the Commander had taken in me.

After the visitors had gone, Corporal Shedd started to chaff me about the young lady—he had his weather eye open, it seems! He said that I was a lucky young beggar for the Commander to have taken notice of me. I replied, "You never know your luck."

I think it was on the 10th of June that a list of names for drafts to four ships was sent over from the *Impregnable*.

A large number of boys were required for the old two-decker, *London*, which was going out to Zanzibar, under the command of Captain Sullivan, as depôt and stores ship for the suppression of the slave trade, which at that time was very active along the whole length of the East Coast of Africa.

Another batch of boys was required for the troop-ship *Adventurer*, which was taking out drafts for a couple of ships on the China station, while a small draft of four boys was required for H.M.S. *Amethyst*, which had recently arrived home from the West Coast of Africa, having taken part in the Ashanti Expedition under the command of General Sir Garnet Wolseley. I saw the

report in the newspapers that her captain (A. J. Chatfield) had been mentioned in despatches for the part he took in the operations.

With the list of the different drafts required was an intimation from Commander Evans—who had not forgotten his promise—that I should be allowed to choose which ship I liked. The other boys wondered why, for they knew nothing of the incident on the orlop deck. When I told them all about it they laughed and said " You are a lucky bounder."

I told Mr. Ball I should like to go to the *Amethyst*. I had a great hankering for the ship I had seen launched on March 1st, 1873. Mr. Ball said, " You are very wise —she is just the class of ship to make a man of you." She was what is known as a " little big ship," where the line of demarcation between the officers and the men on the lower deck is clearly defined.

She was just small enough—with her complement of two hundred and twenty all told—to enable the captain and officers to gain in a short time a thorough knowledge of the characteristics and abilities of the young officers and men. She was a square-rigged ship, carrying fourteen guns. When she had completed her complement and taken in stores, she was ordered to proceed to the south-east coast of South America as Flagship on that station.

I joined the *Amethyst* with three other boys from the *Impregnable* on the 15th June, 1874. I was rowed to the *Amethyst*, which was lying at a buoy in the harbour, and was soon fixed up, being put in a petty officer's mess with another boy named William Dorman. We had been together through all our training, as we joined about the same date.

Having filled up with coal and stores, and with her complement complete, the ship was taken to one of the buoys in Plymouth Sound, just inside the breakwater, to wait for orders.

CHAPTER VI

WANDERLUST

My great desire to see the world was to be gratified at last. The *Amethyst* left Plymouth Sound on the morning of June 20th, 1874, for Rio de Janeiro, the capital of Brazil, a distance of five thousand miles.

We made sail after getting outside the breakwater. Our " No. 1 "(First Lieutenant), now Admiral A. K. Bickford, C.M.G., who joined the ship after she returned home from the Ashanti War, soon took the ship's company in hand, getting them into shape so as to make the *Amethyst* a clean and smart ship.

It was stiff work for the first six months. "No. 1" must have spent a great deal of his time while on half-pay waltzing around dockyards or sawmills!

The second day we were out, the master-at-arms and ship's corporal came around the messes with an old black shiny bag, and issued to each mess a dozen small scrapers, holding the caterer of each mess responsible for them. These scrapers were made of pieces of flat steel, about five inches by four, like parts of broken saws.

Goodness knows where " No. 1 " got them, but we soon found out why they were issued. After divisions each day at 9 a.m., and the watch had been called, the routine for the watch below was to trice up the lockers clear of the deck, and roll up the deck cloth, which was made of stout canvas, and which acted as a carpet for the floor of the deck. The deck would then be damped over, the Jaunty and Corporal seeing that it was done,

H.M.S. Amethyst 14.64 Pounder Guns
Engaged Peruvian Turret Ship Huascar
Commissioned July 1st, 1873 Paid off June 1878

Face page 44

the men going down on their knees and scraping the deck dry. This routine was carried on every forenoon until the planks were as white as the deck of a private yacht.

We came across a derelict vessel in the Bay of Biscay. Her decks were just awash, with the seas breaking over her—it was blowing a fresh breeze at the time. Two stumps of masts, broken off short, were showing above the deck, also part of the wheel-house. Captain Chatfield gave orders to close in on her. Not a soul could be seen on board. As she was a danger to ships passing in the night, our Captain ordered the two after guns on the port side of the deck to be cleared away and loaded. Several shots were fired at her, the projectiles striking her, which caused her to cant over, then gradually to settle down, no doubt going to the bottom.

We proceeded on our journey and when we arrived near the Equator, preparations were made to carry out the usual fun of "crossing the line." The captain of the foretop, old Jack Hobbs (no relation to Jack Hobbs, the famous cricketer! Our Hobbs was cornish) was elected to take the part of Father Neptune. As he had gingery whiskers, it was easy enough to match his beard with oakum!

All the novices—myself included—who had never crossed the "line" before had to go through the ceremony of being shaved and christened "Sons of Neptune."

The old stagers, who had a list of names, brought the novices before Father Neptune and his Court. I rather enjoyed the fun, especially as the water was warm and it did not take very long to dry our clothes.

We called at the Island of Ascension, which lies in mid-ocean. It was used as a port of call for ships running short of coal or stores. We had done a considerable amount of steaming as well as sailing, so we had to call to coal ship.

It was my first experience of coaling ship. Not a very pleasant job, even with the present method of coaling. It was very much worse in the old days, hoisting three or four bags at a time by a single yard whip on each side of the deck.

The "fiddler," perched on the engine room hatch, fiddled away for all he was worth to make the men double on the whip at each hoist. Every bag was tallied as it was dropped inboard, one out of every ten being weighed, and men with iron trucks wheeled the bags away to the coal shutes.

A most unthankful job for everyone, but a necessary one. Coal dust finds its way into every crevice. It is said that "honest labour bears a lovely face," but not after coaling ship in the tropics!

We remained at Ascension three days and then left for Rio. Before we left, several turtles were taken on board; they used to crawl about the waterways until required for soup! None came our way; we had bare Navy tack and thrived on it.

A few days after leaving Ascension we had a regular picnic! "No 1" gave orders to the bo'sun to mix several large tubs of whitewash with plenty of Russian tallow melted down to make it stick to the beams, and with gunpowder from blank rifle charges to colour it, like mother does with the blue-bag.

The next morning, after the hands were called, everything moveable on the mess deck was taken on the upper deck, where we camped out for the day, having our meals spread out picnic fashion.

After breakfast, special hands in white rig were sent below with brushes to clean down every part of the deck overhead; the whitewash tubs were then brought to the front, the whole of the upper part of the mess deck receiving a thorough white-washing, the gunpowder giving it a lovely blue colour. Plenty of hands made light work. We had plenty of them on

the job, with the result that the first coat was on by 8.30 a.m.

The deck was then washed clean, and as we were in the tropics, the first coat was dry and hard in a couple of hours, so "No. 1" decided to give the deck another coat, which was finished by 12 noon, and "piped dinner." We picnicked on fat salt pork and pea soup from the copper; there were no potatoes, but instead hard ship biscuits. A feast for the gods, surely!

In those days sailors had two kinds of hats in their kit. A black hat for winter and a white straw one for summer use, and as we were likely to be away from England for four years, our black hats would not be of much use to us.

During the dinner hour one of the petty officers was asked to see the First Lieutenant about throwing the black hats over-board.

He consulted the captain who came out of his cabin and told the P.O. that the men could do whatever they liked about it, for as they were their property the captain assured him they would not be worn for the commission.

You should have seen those black hats being thrown over the side, everyone seemed to be waiting for the order. They looked like a flock of black crows flying. The black hats were useless articles, and were not done away with in the Navy until the 'eighties.

After dinner all hands went below to give the mess deck a thorough cleaning and to put the deck-clothes or "carpets" down. Lockers were taken below, everything being replaced as before, and the deck smelling as sweet as a smelt.

We did the same thing about two years later. I have never seen it done so thoroughly in any of the many other ships I have been in. We were soon on our usual routine of getting into shape, with sail drill every evening when possible.

CHAPTER VII

A SWIMMING ADVENTURE

We arrived at Rio de Janeiro the latter part of July. It hove in sight during the morning watch, and as we approached we could make out the "Sugar Loaf" a conical rock about two thousand feet high, which formed the terminal of a range of high hills on the left or west side of the entrance.

The right or east side of the entrance had another range of high hills, and as we passed through the narrow entrance I noticed there was a fortress on either side and a small island fort about three quarters of a mile inside, and directly in front. The city of Rio was away on the left.

It has always been considered by seafaring men that the four finest harbours in the world are Sydney Harbour in New South Wales, Rio de Janeiro, Queenstown Harbour in Ireland, and Hong Kong in China. I have spent a good deal of time in the last three named but I have never been to Sydney.

Rio is a lovely harbour with high mountains at the back, numerous islands making a safe anchorage for several fleets.

We moored ship just inside the island fort. H.M.S. *Volage* was there waiting for us to relieve her. Her captain had received instructions from the Admiralty to proceed to England as soon as relieved by us, and to embark a party of scientists who wished to make observation of the transit of Venus.

A Swimming Adventure

The *Volage* left two days after we arrived, transferring to us a marine artilleryman, who brought with him a Martini-Henry rifle. We were armed with the old Snyder rifle, so that everyone was admiring the difference in the breech action of the two rifles. We were told that an old store-ship, the *Egremont*, was anchored behind one of the islands, her ship's company being up country recovering from an attack of yellow fever.

A few days after arriving at Rio de Janeiro some of the younger officers took it into their head that they would like a swim away from the ship after such a long trip. They had the dinghy called away. I was one of the dinghy boys, so we climbed over the boom and brought the boat alongside the starboard gangway. When the officers arrived, one of them, Lieutenant Reeve, said: "Can any of you boys swim?" I said, "Yes, sir, I can." The other boy said he could swim a little bit. Lieutenant Reeve then told me to get my towel if I wanted a swim. I very quickly nipped inboard, down to my locker, got my towel and back in the boat again. Needless to say, I had no bathing costume.

After pushing off, the boat was steered to a spot just outside, and to the left of the island fort, which we had passed coming into the harbour. It lies in a direct line with the entrance and is about three-quarters of a mile inside.

The four officers undressed and jumped overboard, swimming around and having great fun with each other. Rio being in the tropics, the water was nice and warm. I quickly undressed and was over the side as well.

I said to the other dinghy boy, "Jack, don't forget to give me the tip when you see the officers returning to the boat." I naturally kept away from them, swimming and paddling on my own.

While enjoying myself, I saw a crowd of Brazilian sailors, dressed very much like our own blue-jackets,

standing on a kind of platform, which ran round the fort and above the guns. I supposed they were attracted by the unusual sight—to them—of seeing naval officers swimming about near the fort.

I saw that the officers were enjoying themselves, so very foolishly, I swam closer to the fort, so as to get a better view of the men, not thinking of any danger. I kept on swimming towards the fort until I saw the Brazilians waving me back. I stopped swimming and turned away from the fort, but found myself being carried by the silent, heavy ground swell, which was coming in from the Atlantic, closer to it. I struck out with all my might, but found I was not strong enough, so I turned and swam with the swell, working myself around to the side of the island as far as I could before being caught by the waves and dashed up on the rocks surrounding the fort.

I tried to grab them, but failed to hold on, the receding wave carrying me back again like a piece of cork, but I kept my nerve and presence of mind, endeavouring each time I was carried by the inrushing surf, to hold on. I sometimes came in feet first, at other times I had to put my hands in front of my head for protection. At last I must have been carried between two rocks in a kind of gulley-way, where I was able to hold on and pull myself up clear.

The shouting and gesticulations of the Brazilians attracted the attention of the officers, who at once swam to the dinghy, got on board, and pulled in as close as they could with safety. Seeing that I was safe they told me to go round to the lee side of the island, where they would pick me up.

The Brazilian sailors on the platform about thirty feet above me, were jabbering away in their own language, and were pointing out the way for me to go, but I could hardly walk as some of the sea eggs had penetrated the soles of my feet when I returned " feet first."

A Swimming Adventure

I saw the dinghy could not come in very close as there was a lot of jagged rocks in her way, so that it was necessary for me to swim out to her. I was very glad when there was sufficient water to do so as my feet were very sore.

After I was dragged into the boat I got a good lecture for being such a confounded young fool, and for going so close to the island. When the officers saw the state I was in, both my thighs bleeding from scratches, some of them deep, which had been cut by the rocks, also the lower part of my body bleeding from the same cause, they took pity on me and cheered me up. The salt water caused the cuts to smart so much that it brought tears to my eyes, for I was only fifteen and a half years old. I still carry the marks of the cuts on my thighs, and I suppose I shall keep them until I cease to draw my pension.

The officers were very kind to me when I got on board, and had me taken to the sick bay, where my cuts were dressed and bandaged up. It was a fortnight before I was right again, but I forgot all about it, until I commenced this book.

The *Amethyst* remained at Rio about a fortnight, and then sailed for Santos—just to pay an official visit. Santos is just south of Rio, being the seaport of the San Paulo district.

Nothing of any importance happened while we were there, the officers having a run ashore occasionally. At that time it was what Devonshire people would call a "dead and alive hole." We only remained there about ten days, and then returned to Rio.

As we came through the entrance to the harbour we saw H.M.S. *London* working her way out under sail. She was bound for Zanzibar, around the Cape of Good Hope.

We had just finished mooring ship when the *London* made a signal for us to come to her assistance, as since

she had got under way the wind had hauled ahead and had slackened, making it very difficult for her to get through the narrow entrance under sail.

We had to unmoor the ship, and while we were getting our anchors up the *London* dropped anchor and furled her sails.

We got under way and steamed out to her, passing fairly close; crowds of her men were looking out of her gunports on the upper and mess decks, waving their hands to our fellows.

Both the ships hailed from the "West Country," having commissioned at Devonport, so there were several old friends of ours in the *London*. I recognised a few of my old messmates from the *Circe*, and said to myself, "I would rather be on the *Amethyst* than on that old tub."

Captain Chatfield brought his ship just ahead of the *London*, and a cutter's crew took two wire hawsers from her, one through each hawse pipe, which we secured around the towing bollard on each quarter, hauling them well taut first.

As the *London* weighed her anchor we steamed slowly ahead so as to bring an equal strain on both hawsers. We towed the old *London* through the entrance, casting off after she was about ten miles outside, when she made plain sail and started off on her long voyage around the Cape, while we wished her "God speed."

Those old ships required expert seamanship and careful handling to get them safely across the Atlantic; the officers of those days being trained to handle a ship under sail in all sorts of conditions, as our officers of the present day are taught to handle destroyers. The accompanying old print of H.M.S. *Impregnable*, in a gale off Sardinia, 1841, will give you an idea of what I mean.

The *Amethyst* returned to Rio and moored ship

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THE OLD IMPREGNABLE IN A GALE OFF SARDINIA 1841

in our old berth. It was quite dark when we finished.

Before we left for Santos, the wardroom officers must have arranged to purchase a skiff for their personal use, for the day after towing the *London* outside a skiff was brought alongside. I was selected as skiff-boy, which was right in my line; I could not have wished for anything better for she was a lovely little boat, thirteen feet long and as light as a feather. I was excused from other duties so that I might be at the beck and call of the wardroom officers.

They frequently made little excursions amongst the islands for a swim from the smooth sandy beaches. Swimming out by the fort was not allowed after my experience on the rocks, though I had completely recovered from the effects of my knocking about by this time, and had indeed forgotten all about it.

Sometimes the officers would go for a picnic to one of the coves, taking their luncheon with them. I usually had to stow a few bottles of Bass under the stern sheets to keep them cool. I used to enjoy these little outings, getting away in the shade and communing with myself; this was a great habit of mine. I felt quite in my element when on my own, rowing the skiff back to the ship after landing some officers, or when I had to fetch them off to the ship at night.

One night my chum and messmate " Dubby " Dorman was sent in the dinghy to bring a party off; he had to wait some little time alongside the landing-stage before they appeared on the scene.

The next morning while at breakfast he said to me, "Pat, I am feeling awfully queer." I felt his forehead, it was very hot; I told him to go aft to the sick bay at once, and I would wash up.

When the doctor examined him his temperature was found to be very high, so the sailmaker was instructed to prepare a "cot" for him and hang it up under the

forecastle, this being the coolest part of the ship. He had a severe attack of yellow fever, and had a hard struggle to pull through, being nearly six weeks before he was sufficiently recovered to get out of that "cot," and when he did, he was like a bag of bones. I suppose that while he was waiting at the landing-stage he must have caught a whiff from the drains.

The sanitation at Rio at that time was not good, and yellow fever would occasionally break out. I never felt any ill effects from waiting for the officers at night, although it was sometimes very hot and smelly alongside the landing-place.

About the second week in September there was great excitement on the lower deck at the news that the captain had decided to give "general leave"; i.e. forty-eight hours leave to each watch. In those days, night or day leave was never granted to men on the lower deck while serving on foreign stations. They were entitled to forty-eight hours general leave each month, when convenient. We were sometimes without general leave for three or four months before it was found convenient!

It was now September, and the men on the lower deck had not put a foot outside the ship except into a boat since we left England on June 20th. Just imagine a ship's company of two hundred and twenty men being boxed up—as it were—in a ship two hundred and twenty feet long for three months at a stretch.

Can you wonder at the excitement! Can you wonder why sailors, when let loose, would burst out, careless of what they did as long as they had a bit of fun.

Breaking leave, i.e. not returning to the ship when their leave had expired, was the most frequent "crime" committed in the Navy in my young days; the men knowing that whatever punishment was given, it would be over before the next general leave.

A Swimming Adventure

We boys were only allowed on shore from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. I, with a few other boys, had a run on the shore to stretch our legs; a couple of us walked out in the direction of the old slave market, but after walking a couple of hours we found it was too far away so we retraced our steps back to the city.

On passing through a long thoroughfare we could hear the sound of music and dancing; no doubt our men were inside enjoying themselves and swinging the girls around, as I have often done myself in later days.

There were no such places as Institutes or Sailors' Homes at that time; we either had to go for a long walk—which was not attracting in that climate—or spend our leave in a dancing place. Sailors went on shore for a bit of fun, and they usually had it.

Very few of the men broke their leave on this occasion nearly all returning on board at the proper time, some of them in a "semi-sober state," but quite happy! Those who did not return would be hunted up by the police for the sake of the reward which they received for bringing a man on board. They were known as "vigilantes"; funny looking little chaps they were, with copper-coloured faces, rather short, and with long swords hanging down to their heels.

As a man breaking leave only lost a day's pay for every twenty-four hours he was absent, he generally used to give the vigilantes a run for their money.

I won't tell you who used to hide them away. The men, having had their fling on shore, soon settled down to the usual routine.

The *Amethyst* remained at Rio until the end of October and then left for Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay. On our way down I had ample time to take observations of my shipmates on the lower deck.

Among the able seamen were four men whose personality stamped them as of a different class from the others on the mess deck. These men were known

as "Bounty" men, i.e. merchant seamen who had received a bounty or bonus to join the Royal Navy. They were easily distinguished from the men who had been trained in our training ships as boys. They were hard, rugged fellows, but very clean in appearance. One of them, named Phippen, was a very amusing chap, who made himself popular with everyone on the lower deck.

A few years previous to 1870 men belonging to the "seamen" class were leaving the Navy in large numbers when their first period of ten years had expired, instead of engaging for another term so as to complete time for pensions. The Admiralty, to stop the rot, made a special grant of an extra twopence per day to seamen to induce them to rejoin. They also offered bonuses to merchant seamen.

I took a keen interest in watching one of our petty officers, the captain of the maintop, George Shaw by name. He was known by the name of "Long Mick Shaw." He was a splendid type of manhood, about thirty years old. He stood six feet two inches, very muscular, with a fresh complexion. Just the kind of man to attract a youngster as his ideal.

CHAPTER VIII

OLD PHIPPEN'S SPANISH

ARRIVING at Montevideo, we anchored as close in as the depth of water would allow. The holding ground at Montevideo is bad and all ships anchored there had to pay out several lengths of cable so as to assist the anchors in holding when the strong south-west winds blew.

The place seemed to be full of shipping; the larger vessels were scattered about in an open roadstead, while vessels of a light draught moved closer in to the city to a small harbour which I believe has since been greatly improved.

We anchored in line with a very high hill known as the Mount. The masts of two ships could be seen close in under the Mount; they had been driven ashore there during a pampero, a strong south-westerly wind which blows across the South American pampas. A lighthouse has since been erected on the top of this hill.

There was a large factory and slaughter house near the Mount where thousands of cattle were slaughtered every year, the meat being cleaned, cooked and canned for export. There was also a tannery for curing the hides and for dealing with tallow for export, which accounted for the large number of ships anchored at Montevideo.

After we had coaled ship and had cleaned her down, a diversion was created by the man Phippen, whom I

mentioned in the last chapter. To save the bother of keeping up steam for the purpose of condensing water for the use of the ship's company, the first lieutenant decided to get a "water tank" alongside the ship and pump water into our tanks.

The water boats used to sail in amongst the shipping, trying to get a customer for their water. Each carried a large lateen sail, a short mast and a huge yard; the sail looking like a "leg of mutton." In those early days there was no recognised signal for calling a water boat; they would just sail around waiting for someone to hail them. After having once had a boat alongside, a preconcerted signal would be arranged with the skipper of the tank, the signalman showing him the flag that would be hoisted when he was wanted. But for many years now there has been a recognised signal in all ports. I am writing of what was the practice in Montevideo, fifty-three years ago.

"No. 1" instructed the signalman to call to one of the boats sailing by. The signalman failing to attract their attention, the first lieutenant sent the bo'sun's mate forward to try and find a man who could speak Spanish. Someone told old Phippen about it. He ran aft to the poop and said to the first lieutenant, "I can call that tank alongside, sir." "No. 1," knowing that he was one of the merchant seamen asked him if he could speak Spanish. "Yes, sir," he replied. "Very well, carry on and get that tank alongside as soon as you can." With his "ay ay, sir," Phippen went forward to the starboard gangway, placing himself at the top of the ladder; the hands on deck were anxiously waiting to hear Phippen's Spanish, and this is what happened. He made a trumpet with his hands and shouted in a stentorian voice: "Wa-ter tank-e-o, come a-long-sidee-o; bring plent-y aq-ua-o——"

You should have heard the roars of laughter when the men heard old Phippen's watered Spanish; the first

lieutenant and a few officers on the poop could not help laughing at him.

It had no effect on Phippen; he stood in the gangway waving his arms about and repeating his dose of Spanish with a voice like a "town bull," with the result that the attention of the man steering the boat was attracted probably quite as much by the swinging of Phippen's arms as the extempore Spanish.

At all events, he put his helm down, swung his boat around and gradually glided alongside the ship; she was then secured. Hands were detailed to man the pumps, the hoses being led into our tanks.

The conditions for boating at Montevideo were quite different from those at Rio. The harbour at Rio was safe for boating by night or day, the harbour being practically landlocked in comparison with Montevideo, where large ships had to anchor far from the shore. Although it was well into November and was summer time south of the equator, it was rather risky for small boats to go very far from the ship.

I remember taking a party of officers one evening after dinner to pay a visit to H.M.S. *Rocket*, a small gunboat on her way to Esquimalt, Vancouver Island, to act as guard-ship there. She was commanded by Lieutenant the late Admiral Sir Robert Harris, whom I served under as his coxswain, and captain of the mizzen-top many years afterwards, when he was commander of H.M.S. *Defence*.

Rowing the officers to the *Rocket* I was told to make the skiff fast to the boom and come inboard if I liked, which I did. I soon got yarning with some of the *Rocket's* crew, we asking each other all sorts of questions about our ships and the sort of time we had had. I soon learnt what a happy little ship the *Rocket* was, her skipper doing everything for the comfort of his crew. They told me that Lieutenant Harris was a nice quiet gentleman, but very firm, as I found out later on. The

officers must have enjoyed each other's company, as it was after 10 p.m. when the quartermaster came forward and told me to get the boat alongside.

I wished the fellows good-night and good-bye, then went out on the boom to haul the boat up. On letting go the lizard after putting my foot on board, by some means or other I overbalanced, and found myself in the water before you could say "knife." It caused a bit of commotion until they saw that I had scrambled back again into the boat. Several of the men lent me some dry clothes until the morning, when I returned them. I remember the water was quite warm. One of the officers had a glass of whisky passed down to me, which kept me fit.

Our chaplain and naval instructor, the Rev. R. L. Neale, used the skiff more often than any of the other officers. He was very fond of fishing, so whenever it was fine he would have the boat called away.

The chaplain had two hobbies, fishing and smoking. His marine servant told me that his cabin was stocked with pipes, placed in racks fixed to the side of his cabin. He brought enough pipes from England to last the commission. We used to go away rather far from the ship sometimes when fishing, but as the parson did not mind I could not raise any objection.

I fancy I can see him now settling himself in the sternsheets of the skiff, with his billy-cock hat and long frock coat, which he always wore winter or summer. There he would sit with a line in each hand, and remain wrapped up in his own thoughts without saying a word; smoking away and only moving either to refill his pipe from a huge pouch, large enough to hold a quarter of a pound of tobacco; or else to haul in his line.

I sat on the middle thwart keeping the skiff on the move, while he went on fishing, sometimes an hour going by without catching a single fish. It was a

pleasure to him, fish or no fish, to have a line in his hand, jerking it up and down and smoking away.

One afternoon we had drifted further away than usual when it came on to blow a bit fresh. I started pulling hard, having the wind and sea against me. The chaplain, seeing that I could not make much headway against it, sat down and took the after oar and buckled to, just as if he had been an old Oxford or Cambridge blue! I followed his example, exerting all my strength to force the skiff through the water. We passed several merchant ships on our way, and at one part of the journey back I thought we should be compelled to take shelter on board one of them. But his reverence scorned the suggestion. After a long struggle we managed to reach the ship, both of us very tired after our long pull. The chaplain was a big, cumbersome sort of man, over forty years of age, which was considered very old in the navy. I had to assist him to get on his feet, for he was rather shaky and I noticed that his hands and fingers were very red. He showed me where the skin had peeled a bit; no doubt he would have galls later on. It had no effect on my hands, as I was used to it, but just then I was rather tired.

Although it was summer time, we were in for a blow. The wind had increased and blew with such force that all boats were hoisted and the upper yards and masts were sent down. As it still increased in force we had our first experience of striking lower yards and topmast. Fortunately we were able to get our masts and yards down across the gunwhale before darkness set in.

It came on to blow a regular pampero, so an anchor watch was kept during the night, and after having veered out a couple more lengths of cable the ship rode the gale splendidly and without dragging anchor.

The hands were called the next morning at 5.30. On getting on deck we found that the pampero had

nearly blown itself out, but we saw that several of the ships had dragged their anchors during the night, the force of the wind driving some of them foul of the others. Although the merchant ships had braced their yards point to the wind, considerable damage was done to some of their spars during the gale.

At two bells, i.e. 9 a.m., the first lieutenant gave orders to clear lower deck and call everyone aft. When we were all aft " No. 1 " explained to us that owing to the unsettled state of the country we might have to remain some time in the River Plate, where these pamperos are very frequent. He also told us we were going to cross royal yards as an evolution. He wanted to see which mast would be finished first, and said " I want you to think that you are competing against another ship, or fleet of ships." He told the topmen going aloft to be as smart as they could in setting up their rigging after the topmast was fidded. When the order was given everyone rushed to their stations; the mast and lower yards were sent up in good time, topsail yard across, topgallant mast up and royal yards across, and everyone down from aloft. Our time for completing the evolution compared very favourably with the time of H.M.S. *Cadmus*, supposed to be the smartest ship in the navy at that day, and whose time for the evolution we had posted up.

We were " fallen in " again, and were told the work was done very smartly, but as we were likely to be called out during the night, he intended to exercise the ship's company at it until he was satisfied we would not be caught napping.

We were just settling down after our experience of the pampero when news was brought on board that a revolution had broken out in some part of Uruguay. Shortly afterwards we heard that a large party of men were marching on Montevideo. Our officers attached very little importance to what they had heard, as the

people of the South American countries were always having a "scrap" with each other in those days.

A few days later something serious must have happened, as the British Minister at Montevideo requested our captain to have some men, fully armed, ready to land at any time to protect the Legation, as rioting had broken out in the city. We were accordingly instructed to leave our blankets out when lashing up our hammocks, and next morning, after divisions, two complete companies of men were selected, with stretcher bearers. Ammunition was served out and kept in the men's pouches ready for landing.

We were taught how to roll up our blankets to form a "horse collar," to be worn over the right shoulder, with straps around the blanket to keep it in place. The two ends, being tied together, came just behind the hilt of our cutlass, at the left side. Marines were the only men supplied with bayonets in those days, while the bluejackets had long cutlasses to fix to the muzzle of their rifles when charging; also using them when necessary while boarding an enemy ship. No doubt you have seen the pictures of men clambering on board another ship, with a cutlass in their mouth. I will leave any further description to your own imagination!

The two companies were equipped ready for any emergency, and, every forenoon at 10 o'clock "fallen in" for one hour's drill. This routine continued until the disturbance on shore had simmered down, which it did in a fortnight.

Leggings of any recognised pattern were not worn in the navy at that time, every commanding officer having his own idea as to what landing parties should do with the bottoms of their trousers. There was a recognised uniform "tuck in" to use so as to prevent the bell-bottoms of the trousers from flapping about. The bottom part was pulled out taut, then tightly wrapped round the leg—as cyclists do when putting on

clips—the bottom was then turned up twice, making the trousers snug around the ankles.

While the companies were "fallen in" on the second forenoon, "No. 1" told the officers in charge that he would expect to see every man with a pair of leggings on the next day. The men were dismissed and were given the remainder of the day off in order to make their leggings by a pattern hung up on the lower deck. The pattern was made of white duck, bound with blue jean, and with a kind of spat in front. It was a busy time for the men, who were handy with their needle making the leggings for those who could not make their own. These were industrious men, known as "jews," who, in order to augment their pay, would make the clothes of the other men.

Sailors always had to make their own clothes, or else had to pay others to make them, which came very expensive on our small pay. Naturally we youngsters quickly learned how to make our own.

CHAPTER IX

A CHRISTMAS SPENT AT MONTEVIDEO

TIME was now drawing on towards Christmas, 1874, and great preparations were being made by the men on the lower deck for decorating their "little homes on the sea" for Christmas Day.

The commanding officer gave the caterers of messes every facility for going on shore with the officers' stewards when they went marketing in the morning. The caterer of each mess would be assisted by some of the older hands in making out a list of the special luxuries they would require for the Christmas dinner. Mutton was very cheap; one could buy a whole sheep for less than ten shillings, so you may depend that there was a great call on legs of mutton which were not a part of our service ration. The caterers also went in for plenty of poultry, giving their mess-mates, in fact, a regular "beano!"

The amount spent largely depended—as I discovered later—on the mess savings in hand, i.e., money paid by the paymaster to the caterer of each mess at the end of the month for the amount of service rations not taken up by the mess from the ship's steward.

The system of victualling at the present time is quite different from that in vogue during the whole period of my service. We were frequently called upon to subscribe from our small pay towards the mess funds—especially at Christmas time—to buy potatoes or flour.

With a light heart we would gather around the caterer like a lot of schoolboys while he unpacked his parcels, placing the different kinds of fruit, nuts, and other good things on the table for our approval.

After it was all stowed away, all hands were busy sorting out the different sheets of coloured paper for decorating the messes. It was really surprising the amount of ingenuity shown, and how artistically the men decorated their messes at Christmas time.

They set aside every evening for making chains and chandeliers, the latter being made with the iron hoop of a cask, suspended by spun yarn, a weight being put below the hoop to keep every part of the spun yarn taut. The whole was then covered with paper, blending the colours artistically.

There was a run on the ship's plumber for strips of tin, with which the men made small candlesticks, attaching them to, and outside the hoop of the chandeliers, the men saving up the candles—or purser's dips—from their mess allowance for months ahead.

The messes would be darkened by flags borrowed from the signalman, these being usually large foreign ensigns, not likely to be required. The messes were darkened so as to show up the decorations by the light thrown out from the candles around the hoop of the chandeliers.

Some very clever devices were made by the men in trying to out-do each other. These contrivances had a most pleasing effect, the decorations appearing wonderful to me and to other youngsters who had never been on board ship at Christmas time.

To prepare you for coming events I should like to describe our lower deck. There were only two ships in the navy built with flush decks, viz., H.M.S. *Amethyst* and H.M.S. *Modeste*. They were sister ships, both being fourteen gun corvettes, with a complement of two hundred and twenty officers and men. They were as

alike as two peas. Neither ship had any bulkheads or obstruction to a clear view from the cell door in the forepart of the lower deck to the captain's cabin right aft.

The cooking galleys, casing around stokehold and engine room, were amidships; officers' cabins and mess-rooms were built close to the ship's side, the wardroom being close to the starboard side, with a passage between it and the cabins.

The mess tables and lockers on the mess deck were placed fore and aft, leaving a clear space from four to nine feet between the lockers and coamings of the hatches in the centre, which allowed the men to have a fine, healthy, and comfortable deck as their living room.

As the day approached, one hand from each mess was allowed to form a party to take the cutter to a quiet spot on shore and cut down some green stuff to provide for the decorations. They also brought off a large bush for each masthead, the royal yard men securing it aloft on Christmas morning.

To see the men making the huge Christmas puddings was a sight to gladden the heart of any boy. I watched them with keen interest, picking up a wrinkle or two. When all the puddings were tied down and labelled, they were handed over to the ship's cook, who remained on duty the whole of Christmas Eve night boiling the puddings, his mate relieving him for short spells during the vigil.

A week or so before Christmas a few of the most lively spirits on the lower deck gathered down in the bo'sun's storeroom, under the leadership of our second captain of the forestop, whose name was Ben Wilde. He was a splendid banjo player. Old Ben could make his banjo talk, they used to say.

The *Amethyst* and ships of her class were allowed as part of their complement, one musician, a violinist,

known as the " Fiddler." He also acted as the bo'sun's storekeeper. Fortunately, our fiddler was a very good musician; his family being well-known executants in the West Country at that time.

During the meeting, it came out that there was a lot of musical talent on the lower deck, with the result that the foundation of a clever negro minstrel and concert party was formed, which made a bright spot in our lives during the commission. They arranged for a beginning to be made on Christmas Day, as a side line.

When the hands were called on Christmas morning it seemed homelike to hear the men shouting greetings across the deck to each other.

After breakfast the watch was called. The watch below set about cleaning and decorating their messes, hanging the chandeliers and coloured chains overhead, and then darkening the messes with flags and the green foliage which had been brought off by the cutter.

The watch on deck was employed in cleaning and putting everything in apple-pie order. The green bushes secured to each mast-head looked fine, and there was also a large bush secured to the jack-staff on the bowsprit.

At 8.30 a.m. hands were piped to clean, i.e., dress themselves in white frocks, tunics and straw hats, their best clothes. After divisions for inspection, Divine service was held on the quarter deck until 11 a.m., the Roman Catholics gathering under the fo'c'sle. One of our quartermasters, known as old Jim Murray, read a short service to us.

When church was over and the men dismissed, only the cooks and caterers dared show their nose on the mess deck until the " rounds." They were busy putting the finishing touches to the deocrations, and placing their dainties about the table to the best advantage; cutting up a cake and pudding into small pieces on plates, to be offered by the cooks of each mess to the captain

and officers as they slowly passed each mess on their tour of inspection.

At 11.45 a.m., on hearing the " Roast Beef of Old England " played, I sneaked below and hid myself on the other side of the cooks' galley, where I could get a good view, as I was anxious to watch the procedure.

I saw the captain and a group of officers of all ranks coming along the port side of the deck, after inspecting the marine messes further aft. In front of the captain and officers were three men, with long-handled brooms; they were supposed to be sweeping old Father Time along! Behind the sweepers was an extempore band composed of two violins, two banjos, two tin whistles, and bones. The whole party had their faces blackened, and were dressed as negro minstrels; they were playing the " Roast Beef of Old England," though I can assure you there wasn't a bit of roast beef or any other kind of beef on the lower deck that day. We were simply fed up with beef, it being the only kind of meat issued as our daily ration. When in harbour our caterers went in for mutton, and plenty of it.

The captain and officers admired the tasteful way the messes were decorated, for, with all the candles on the chandeliers lit, the whole deck made a very pretty picture; while to me it seemed grand. Certain of the men had erected and partitioned off some very fine tableaux outside their messes in midships.

It was quite amusing to see how the cooks, standing plate in hand at the end of their loaded tables, tried all they knew to induce the officers to taste their puddings or other dainties. The captain and officers seemed to have enjoyed their inspection of the messes by the way they were laughing and joking with each other, while some of the younger ones were loaded with an assortment of pudding, cake, nuts and oranges, which had been forced upon them by the men.

As soon as the " rounds " were over all the bo'sun's mates gathered around the hatch leading to the mess deck, and piped the men to dinner. We all turned to with zest, and soon played havoc with the hot joints and puddings brought from the galley.

When the dinner things were washed up and cleared away, we sat around the table waiting for the bugles to sound grog. Being Christmas Day, our men passed the grog around, i.e., passed a basin of rum around for each man to take a drink from it. After it had been around the men the caterer handed a basin to me, with the remark, " Here boy, have a drink, but don't go too deep!" It was the first time I had tasted rum, not being allowed any until I was eighteen.

The usual practice among our men was for the two cooks to take the " kettle," i.e. the whole of the rum ration issued. The method of serving out the rum varies in different ships; in some, the cooks serve out small tots, keeping the remainder for themselves.

To chief petty officers half a gill of rum is issued neat; other ratings on the lower deck had half a gill mixed with water in the grog tub; the amount of water varying in different ships and according to the whims of the commanding officer.

In the *Amethyst* we had " two water," i.e., two half gills of water well mixed with the half gill of rum, a very pleasant drink, and not too strong. In some ships they issued " three water," making a very long drink. Do not think for a moment that the cooks drank all the rum themselves; they would ask their chums, either in their own or some other mess, to have a drink, and these, in turn, would return the compliment.

It is surprising, even to this day, what a cook of a mess can get done for him in the navy by the offer of a tot of rum; it has a wonderful purchasing power, and I thought it was all so very human, this asking their chums to have a drink.

Christmas at Montevideo

We spent a most enjoyable afternoon. Our " negro " minstrels installed themselves on the sailroom hatch in the centre part of the lower deck, and entertained the men with their music and patter.

When, occasionally, they played waltz or other dance music, you should have seen the way our men coupled up, swinging around between the lockers and coamings of the hatches as if they were in a ballroom. Can you wonder why sailors have the reputation of being able to steer their partners clear of others when in a crush? They are trained to dance in confined spaces, and whenever there is a band or any kind of music on board ship, sailors learn to dance.

To give the musicians a rest a sing-song was started; a man from each mess singing a song, until every mess had done their bit. The words of the songs could easily be heard, all hands joining in the chorus.

There is a saying that it is impossible to draw blood from a stone, but it is wonderful the way sailors can " tap the mast " for a drink! Some hidden treasures were brought forth that afternoon!

I turned in that night after offering up a few prayers feeling quite happy and contented with my lot as a sailor boy.

CHAPTER X

A VISIT TO BUENOS AIRES

A DAY we all looked forward to was the arrival of the mail boat from England, bringing news from home, and as we were often six weeks or two months getting the latest news you can imagine how anxious everyone was to get a letter, especially the married men who were waiting to hear how their wives and families were getting on since daddy had left home; also the single men who were looked for letters from their parents or sweethearts.

It was the duty of the ship's corporal, after the mail bag had been sorted, to bring the letters for the lower deck forward and distribute them, the bo'suns mate piping "hand of a mess for letters." The corporal usually perched himself on the sailroom hatch, which, as I have previously described is situated about the centre of the lower deck. Not merely one hand from each mess, but all who were expecting letters would crowd around old Jack Mooney, the corporal.

It was a study in human nature to watch the tense expressions on the faces of the different men gathered around anxiously waiting. The joy and eagerness they showed when holding out their hands to receive a letter for themselves or for their particular chum. The keen look of disappointment on the faces of some men at not receiving a letter, and as it was generally during the dinner hour when they were served out, these forgotten ones would go on deck and have a smoke to hide their

feelings. Those who had received letters would sit down on the coamings of the hatches, and give themselves over to the joy of learning the latest news.

It was comical to see a man after reading his letter stand up and stretch his limbs as if he had just got something off his chest, then walk over to his chum with either a smile or a serious look on his face and tell him of all the changes that had taken place since he had last heard. In such a case it might be two men from the same town or village comparing notes. The few newspapers sent out by relatives or friends were eagerly scanned, and then passed on to their messmates to read. I have known men bring out their old newspapers from their lockers weeks after they had arrived and read them over and over again.

Newspapers from home were treasured up in those days very differently from the present day, when it is so easy to get English news in most parts of the world. After all the private letters had been distributed, and the official letters were gone through, it was found that the mail bag contained a surprise packet for the majority of the officers and men. It contained instructions from the Admiralty to pay what was known as "hard living money," i.e. money paid to officers and men when engaged on "active service" on shore. I was told that the men received sixpence per day for every day so employed.

The ship's company of H.M.S. *Amethyst* formed a part of the Naval Brigade under the command of General Sir Garnet Wolseley, 1873 and 1874, which crossed the river Prah and captured Kumasi, the capital of Ashanti. They were on the shore several months before the Ashanti King gave in, and when the officers and men returned to the ship our fellows had a nice little pay-day to come.

The captain gave general leave, and some of those who had been paid hard-living money foolishly spent it when they went on shore for their fling. Some of

the regular leave breakers, who were stretching their forty-eight hours' leave to three or four days, or until brought off to the ship by vigilantes, received a severe shock when they appeared before the captain the next day.

Arriving in the same mail bag as the instructions to pay the men extra money was another surprise packet which was sent to every ship afloat. It revolutionised the whole system of punishment in the Navy from January, 1875. Consequently those men who had broken their leave, instead of losing one days' pay for every twenty-four hours adrift, had a day's pay stopped for every six hours or part thereof absent. The drastic punishment, known as "10.A" was introduced into the Service at the same time, and men who were punished with seven, ten or fourteen days' 10.A. had an awful time when the sentence was strictly carried out. They were ordered out at 4 a.m., and on their knees, not saying their prayers, but holystoning some dirty spot by rubbing wet sand into the deck with large sandstones, which were carried by all ships in those days as part of their stores. All their meals were eaten under a sentry's charge, and they carried their hammock or bed over their shoulders on the quarter-deck until 10 p.m.

At the same time, men on the lower deck were classed for leave in four classes, viz. 1st class, known as "special," 2nd class, known as "privilege," 3rd class, known as "general,"—men who were only allowed ashore once a month at home or abroad—and 4th class, known as "habitual"—men who never came off at the proper time. These were only allowed ashore once in ninety days.

I have given these details with the idea of showing the great changes that have taken place during my service. On looking back after so many years one may well ask themselves, "Did these severe punishments have any deterrent effect?" In my opinion they did not. To reduce leave-breaking—give leave whenever it is possible.

Our next trip was to Buenos Aires, the capital of

A Visit to Buenos Aires

Argentina, situated further up the River Plate, and on the other side of the river from Montevideo.

As the water between the two cities was very shallow, we had to engage a pilot to take the ship up the river. Even then we felt several slight bumps as we passed over some of the banks! We had to moor the ship several miles away from Buenos Aires, right out in the roadstead, whence we could just make out with the naked eye the large buildings on the shore. What a great improvement there has been made in the navigation of the River Plate since the time of which I am writing! Millions of pounds have been spent on dredging and deepening the river from Maldonado right up to Buenos Aires in order to enable large liners to make regular calls, as they have done now for several years.

The British Minister paid the ship a visit the second day we were there, our guns firing a salute after he had left the ship.

In addition to using the cutters for the stewards to go marketing and for the ship's steward to bring off fresh beef for the ship's company, the steam pinnace was hoisted out to make the long journey between the ship and the shore. Most of the officers had a run ashore at Buenos Aires, as even at that time it was a fine city, and according to what I have heard there was plenty of life there!

There were several merchant ships—as at Montevideo—anchored in the river, discharging or taking in cargoes, so that our cutters' crews and their passengers had somewhere to run for shelter should it come on to blow.

Where we had anchored in the river the water was quite fresh. The men soon took advantage of this fact, and turned to and washed all their dirty clothes, blankets and bedding. The weather was lovely for the first ten days, with bright sunshine, so it did not take long to dry the clothes. But we were soon in for another blow.

I think we had been at Buenos Aires a fortnight, when one afternoon it was noticed by the Quarter-

master of the Watch that the barometer had dropped considerably. He reported it to the first lieutenant, who had the hands called. The steam pinnace was hoisted inboard and secured, and the upper yards and mast sent down. Just after tea it came on a regular sneezer; our second turn of it!

We struck lower yards and topmast and veered out a few more lengths of cable on each bridle, making everything snug for the night. We were getting quite used to the job of sending down our spars! The Rio de la Plata—to give the river its full name—seemed to be the cradle of storms. Fortunately they do not last for any length of time, but blow themselves out like the snuffing of a candle.

When we turned out the next morning the sea was quite calm, and on looking up at the sky, which was beautifully clear, we could see a mirage. It was the first I had ever seen, and I have never seen anything like it since. All the ships—including our own—were reflected in the sky; but they were shown in an inverted position. You could look right on to the decks of the different ships, the masts pointing downwards; it seemed as if one were looking at something through a mirror.

We remained a month at Buenos Aires before returning to Montevideo, and anchoring as near as possible to our old berth and in a line with the Mount, which was as close as we could get to the city with any safety.

It may not be out of place if I give a brief account of the religious services held on board our ship. These were as much a part of our routine as "piping dinner."

Every morning after divisions for inspection, let it blow high or blow low, the chaplain had to read the Morning Prayers. The first lieutenant would give the orders to the Roman Catholics to fall out from their divisions, and they would go forward under the forecastle. The order was then given to the officers and men on the quarter-deck "Off caps." After the ser-

vice was over and the order "On caps" had been given, the Roman Catholics would double aft and join their divisions, the hands then being told off for their several duties by the first lieutenant.

It did not require many months in the ship to become acquainted with the fact that Captain Chatfield was religiously inclined. Every Sunday forenoon Divine Service was held, either on the Quarter-deck or else on the Mess deck, according to the state of the weather. In the tropics the sun would be too strong to allow the service on deck, so it would be held below; the Roman Catholics remaining on deck. Our captain was very strict on every officer and man attending Divine Service on Sunday, the only persons excused being those on duty or sick and unable to attend, unless one was a Roman Catholic, which fact is entered on your parchment certificate when you first join. I have seen several men punished for skulking from church on Sunday.

Whenever the chaplain was indisposed and not able to take the service, our captain would hold the service for him. I have often heard the men say that they would rather listen to him preaching the sermon than to the chaplain, who was a heavy man and had a ponderous delivery. It was said that he was a splendid naval instructor for the young officers; so that what we lost on the swings we gained on the roundabouts. The captain had a very clear and distinct delivery; his voice could easily be heard on deck, and he was a most eloquent preacher. It was said on the lower deck that his father was the vicar of Woodford, near Salisbury. It seemed a clear case of heredity.

When at sea and under sail, the Roman Catholics would have to do any odd job that came along during the service below. I have often smiled to myself since when I think of the number of times the R.C.s had to shorten sail, or trim yards to the tune of "Crown

Him Lord of All," or any other hymn that was being sung at the time. The words and music were wafted to our ears by the strong or gentle breezes blowing, whether we were aft about the spanker, or forward furling the head sails. It is like most things, one gets used to it in time and looks upon it as a necessary part of the routine of a vessel under sail.

In those days there were only two religions recognised in the Navy when on a foreign station—Church of England and Roman Catholic. Every facility was given to the latter—whenever possible—to go on shore to Mass under the charge of an officer. Should there be an officer who was a R.C. he would take charge, or else a midshipman. There were seventeen Roman Catholics on board the *Amethyst*, so we always had sufficient men to form a cutter's crew to row the boat ashore and back to the ship again, and also to provide a man as boat-keeper to look after the boat while we were away. Old Phippen, whom I have mentioned before, generally secured that job. We knew the reason; there was a pub close at hand! He was as artful as a wagon-load of monkeys, and he never gave himself away. After landing we were marched to the church by the officer; if he were a R.C. he would go inside, but if not, he would remain outside until the service was over. Roman Catholics nearly always carry their own Prayer Book which enables them to follow the service in whatever part of the world they may be. The sermon, which is always delivered in the language of the people of the particular country where we happened to be at the time, was the only part of the service we were unable to follow.

I thought it strange at first to find very few seats in the body of a church; nearly the whole of the congregation had to remain on their knees for the greater part of the service. I have noticed the same thing in most of the Spanish churches in South America. The floors are of marble!

CHAPTER XI

THE VISIT OF THE FLYING SQUADRON

In the early part of March, 1875, we heard that the Flying Squadron was coming to pay a visit to Montevideo. Naturally their intended visit was looked forward to with keen interest by all hands on board, because in those days it was a very rare occurrence to meet what was at that time considered a large fleet of ships on a foreign station.

It required very few ships to patrol and look after the country's affairs on any of the far away stations. I believe there were only four ships on the south east coast of America under our Captain's command. You can quite understand, therefore, that we were looking forward to their visit. The Flying Squadron was practically a training squadron for officers and men during its commission of three years or more, visiting nearly every part of the globe and carrying the British flag to the "frontiers of the world," thereby adding to our prestige as a maritime nation.

About three weeks later we saw that a couple of British transports had anchored a long way out. We were told that the Admiralty had arranged for transports to meet the squadron at different ports on their journey around the world in order to provide the fleet with coal and stores. Montevideo was one of the ports selected.

Four days after the transports had arrived the fleet was seen coming up the river. They had to anchor

a long way from the city owing to the shallowness of the water. That evening we all gathered in little groups discussing the appearance of the different ships from a lower-deck point of view, we youngsters listening to the old hands, several of whom had sailed in former flying squadrons. Of course there were a few arguments amongst them as to which was the smartest ship in their time. They pointed out the different ships, the *Narcissus*, the flagship *Doris*, *Immortalité*, *Undaunted*, and *Topaz*. All five were wooden frigates, the "wooden walls" of old England. There was another long, black ship which they could not make out, but which proved to be *Raleigh*, a wood and iron ship, quite a different class of vessel from the others. They looked a fine lot of ships to youngsters like ourselves who had never seen many large ships. The only fleet I had seen was the Channel Squadron at the opening ceremony of Holyhead Breakwater by the Prince of Wales, described in an earlier chapter.

The day after the arrival of the squadron, our captain paid his respects to the Rear Admiral Commanding, using the steam pinnace on account of the distance. You may depend upon it we were all anxiously waiting for the following Monday, as Monday forenoon in the Navy is set aside for "general drill" whenever the ships are in harbour.

The *Amethyst* ship's company at that time considered themselves very smart at any evolution aloft, but we had never been tested against another ship. After divisions we were dismissed to await the signal. When the first lieutenant gave the order, "Strike lower yards and topmast," our fellows were delighted, although it was heavy work, but we had had, through necessity, plenty of practice at it since our arrival in the River Plate.

Our upper spars were down in a brace of shakes, topsail yards down and fore and aft the deck; topmast and lower yards down and every man cleared from aloft in

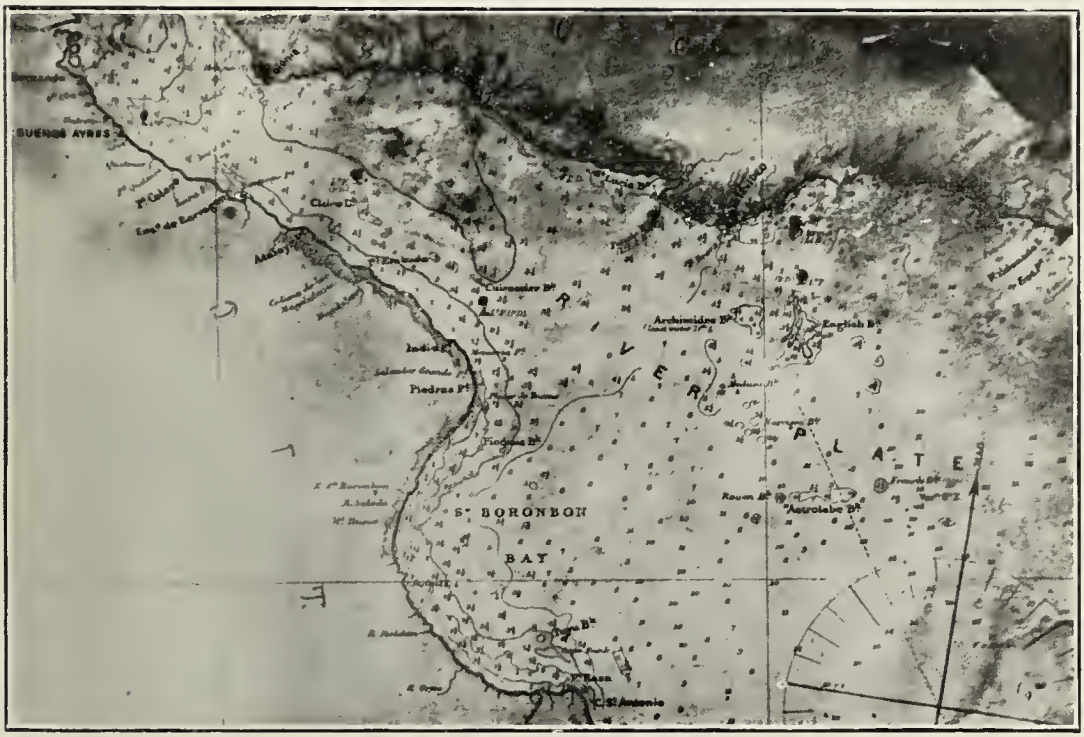

CHART OF RIVER PLATE 1875 SHOWING SHALLOW DEPTH OF WATER OFF BUENOS AIRES, MONTEVIDEO AND MALDONADO

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very smart time, giving us plenty of time to watch the other ships. The Admiral gave the signal: "Well done, *Amethyst*."

After the last ship had completed the evolutions and the men had just a little "stand easy," the signal was made to cross royal yards. We went at it like long dogs, every man-jack quite pleased with himself, both at the way we had beaten the fleet, and with the admiral's signal. Getting our spars aloft again was rather heavy work for a small ship's company, but we stuck to it and completed the evolution in fairly smart time, beating the whole fleet, but not to such an extent as we did when getting the spars down.

The squadron left Montevideo after staying ten days, sailing for Cape Town on their way to the Indian Ports, China and Japan.

Having settled down to our usual routine, an accident —amusing to the men of the lower deck—happened to our old friend Phippen; and when the story was told by those who had seen it there was many a laugh at the daring and smart way in which the trick was carried out.

The water boat was alongside supplying the ship with water, the hoses were inboard and the men busy pumping water into our tanks. It happened to be a very fine forenoon with the sun shining brightly, which may have been the cause of our ship's corporal, Jack Mooney, coming on deck for an airing. Old Jack was a big heavy man, weighing fifteen stone, but he was very light on his feet, and could nip along the deck or down a ladder quickly when he was in a hurry. The corporal perched himself on the top step of the gangway ladder, where he could look at the shipping, and glance occasionally towards the water boat. Whether he smelt a rat or not, I cannot say. Probably he had noticed that whenever the water boat was supplying the ship, old Phippen was always one of the pumping

party, or else by some means or other he would manage to get on board the boat!

There seemed to be a great friendship between him and the skipper of the water boat ever since the time when he first called the boat alongside with his "water tank-e-o——"

Just about seven bells, 11.30 a.m., the corporal saw Phippen come up from the cabin of the boat and climb inboard by the fore-rigging. I should like to describe to you the position below—you will get a better idea of old Phippen's smartness.

Just underneath the break of the forecastle was an iron ladder leading to the forepart of the lower deck. Abaft the ladder was the lower part of the foremast; abaft the mast was a small table about three feet by two feet, with a stool on each side, while under the table was a round tub for cleaning purposes. This was the ship corporal's mess. I suppose the idea of fixing him on the mess deck was to keep order, like all other policemen! Mooney seldom remained in his mess after having his meal; the place was so cramped for a man of his size that whenever he sat down he either had to put his feet into the tub, or else place them outside, with his toes turned out to an angle of forty-five degrees!

But to return to the story. Phippen, having seen that the corporal was coming forward, at once ran down the fore-ladder, and as he got close to the corporal's mess he was seen to pull something out from inside his jumper and, as quick as lightning, place it under the corporal's table, no doubt in the tub. He then resumed his hurried walk aft. The men, sitting in their messes, wondered what was up when they saw Phippen rushing down the ladder with the corporal after him. As soon as Phippen had unloaded his cargo and had hurried past the mess, he eased up as he got further aft. The corporal caught up with him as he

reached the cooks' galley, and laying his huge hand on his shoulder, said, "Now, then, Phippen, what have you got on you?" Old Phippen turned round with an astonished look on his face and said, "What do you mean, Mooney?" Without replying, the corporal proceeded to search him, but drew a blank. The amusing part of it was, as we found out afterwards, that when the corporal sat down at dinner, the "skin" containing the spirit was lying nice and snug in his mess-tub, while he sat there with his feet turned out on either side of it!

When most of the men had gone on deck to smoke or yarn, and others had stretched off on the lockers for their dinner-hour nap, old Phippen, whose mess was quite close to the corporal's, embraced the opportunity of recovering his treasure, and stowed it away for safety.

There was a gathering of the clans late that night right forward under the forecastle. By "clans" I mean the four merchant seamen whom I have mentioned before: Old Phippen, "Darkie" Court—a dark, swarthy man—"Jock" Ayres and "Shanghai" Gibbs, so called because he often related the story of how he was "shanghaied" or doped with strong drink, and woke forty-eight hours later, miles out to sea.

During the four years we were away from England these men stuck together like brothers, and when their forty-eight hours' general leave occurred they would settle down in one pub and remain there until their leave was up. This was typical of the old days.

Great changes have taken place in both method and time of transporting cargoes from one part of the world to the other since those days of which I am writing, about fifty-three years ago. In those days one rarely if ever saw a tramp steamer; nearly all cargoes being carried up the River Plate in sailing vessels, some of them looking like old rattletraps.

Memories of a Blue-jacket

As the River Plate is situated somewhere about thirty-five degrees south of the equator, the seasons are reversed from those at home; summer-time when we get fairly decent weather—except an occasional pampero, which wakes us up a bit—running from October to March. Our twelve-oared cutters often experienced very rough times when returning to the ship after landing parties of officers or men, or stewards for their marketing; especially in the evening during the winter months, as we lay so far away from the city.

On the way from the shore a sudden breeze would sometimes spring up, which, owing to the shallowness of water, caused a short, choppy sea; this, with the force of the wind, made it difficult for our cutters to reach the ship.

On several occasions during the winter at Montevideo our cutters had to make the nearest merchant ship for shelter. It became a standing joke with the cutter's crew, when leaving the ship in the evening, to bring anyone off from shore, "Well, chaps, what ship to-night? British, French, Spanish, or Dutch?" Our men, on returning to the ship after having been obliged to run for temporary shelter, were always full of praise for the kind way they had been treated. Whatever the nationality of the ship to which they went, they were always treated with every kindness by the officers and men of that ship. Hot coffee or tea spoke a language they all understood; it showed our men what was meant by the brotherhood of the sea, that wonderful spirit of good-fellowship which sailors, of whatever nationality, extend to each other. That same *esprit de corps* is as strong to-day as it has ever been. It was shown by the gallant rescue in mid-Atlantic of the twenty-five men of the *Antinoc*, during heavy gales, by the United States liner, *President Roosevelt*.

As I have mentioned before, our men frequently had to run for shelter to another ship. One Saturday

evening out first cutter was returning on board with a large party of officers who had been for a run on shore, and who were returning so as to be in time for dinner at 6.30. As the cutter had not arrived at 6 p.m. our first lieutenant got a bit anxious, and told the signalmen to keep a good look-out for her as a rather large party were on shore. At 6.15 p.m. the cutter was spotted among the shipping, making her way out under reefed sails. I well recollect that it was a Saturday night, as we were slinging clean hammocks. Fortunately, it was the first cutter. She was fitted out like a life-boat, having a thick cork belt covered with canvas right round the outside, just below her rowlocks, which acted as a fender; cork to a depth of four inches, also covered with canvas, was fixed under each thwart, making her impossible to sink. She was popularly known as the *Mocking Bird.* She was heavy to pull through the water, but perfectly safe for sailing, and the officers, knowing the stability of the boat, must have made up their minds to chance reaching the ship rather than spend the night out of their bunks. Eventually she managed to reach the port gangway, where there was no accommodation ladder, but simply steps in the ship's side and man-ropes by which to pull oneself up. They managed it just as twilight set in. The wind meanwhile had increased in force, making it difficult for the bowmen to hang on with their boat-hooks; the boat's painter was passed inboard and secured just in time. The boat then shipped a sea right over the bows, knocking the two bowmen into the middle of the boat and swamping the old *Mocking Bird.* taking her down flush with the water.

Most of the officers had managed to climb up the ladder before she dipped, and as she did not go right under, the remainder followed quickly, also several of the after oarsmen. The news went around the ship like wildfire that the cutter had swamped alongside.

There was a general rush to the gangway and upon the gunwales, many of the men bringing their hammock lashings with them, throwing the part with the running eye over the nettings. The men who happened to have been on deck at the time made running bowlines in some ropes that were around the mainmast, threw them over the side, and helped to pull some of the crew to a place of safety.

The first lieutenant gave orders for the grass hawser to be brought along, and secured to the cutter. Jack Lee, one of our bo'sun's mates, jumped down into the cutter, and made the hawser fast to the boat, which was at once dropped astern and secured for the night, Lee remaining in the boat until she was under the counter, when he was hauled up with a bowline. As soon as the cutter had dropped clear of the gangway the men commenced to haul all the ropes inboard: there were dozens over the side. One man, finding that he had something hanging from his rope, called out for help. The rope was taken aft to the opening in the gangway, a couple of hands ran down the ladder, and, hanging on to the man-ropes with one hand, they reached down and got hold of a man's arms, and turned him head up. Another man took a rope's end down and passed it around his body for the men on top to haul him up the ladder, assisted by the two men. In the growing darkness it was impossible to see who it was, the other men of the cutter's crew having gone below to change their wet clothes, but when they laid him on the deck it was found to be Joe Hayes, one of the bowmen.

The doctor had been sent for, and he at once set a couple of men to work at artificial respiration, their efforts proving successful after a very short time, as he had not been in the water very long and having been hanging head downwards, there was not much water in him. It was a near squeak for old Joe, his foot having caught in one of the many bow-lines over

Joe Hayes, A.B.

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the side, thus saving him from going down. It was one of the incidents which happen now and then, and which make one ponder and think. I particularly remember it because we were great friends during the whole time we were away from England. He came from Liverpool, and was a R.C. like myself.

Like most of the men who came from Lancashire in those days, Joe was a splendid clog-dancer, and had won the championship of the Navy while stationed at Devonport. He was a great asset to our nigger minstrels, who were well under way by this time. Many times we have sat watching and listening to the sound of his clogs pattering on the stage.

Our negro minstrels had made great progress under the direction of Ben Wilde, who had gathered together a really fine troupe, some of whom were real artists in the execution of their "turns." The singers' voices were trained to blend together in perfect harmony, especially when rendering some of the old negro spiritual and homeland songs. There were nineteen performers in the troupe, all made up to resemble the Christy Minstrels at home!

There was Ben Wilde as Master of Ceremonies in the centre, looking resplendent with his banjo on his knee, with two other banjoists on each side of him. There were also our fiddler, and three other violinists, while the remainder had bones as "clappers." The two corner-men were extremely funny to listen to, with their patter and repartee. One of them was our wardroom officers' chef, Harry Miller; the other was called Tancock, and came from Exeter. They were both good at giving a stump speech, and standing in front of the others, with their long-tailed coats they looked very comical. They had a small table in front of them and would bring their hands down on it when they wanted to emphasize a point. I remember they used to address the M.C. when they had made

a witty hit, and tell him to "stick another pin there, Brother Harris."

The entertainment was always held on the quarter-deck, abaft the mainmast, with the awning spread and curtains down, a length of canvas being stretched across the deck to protect the stage and the audience from the wind. The stage would be rigged up between the mast and the engineroom hatch. The captain and officers always attended, and enjoyed the fun, which was a pleasant break in the monotony of our lives.

Naval men of the present day would hardly believe that a ship, with a complement of only two hundred and twenty all told, carried a schoolmaster. The boys who were serving in her knew it. Every afternoon, when at sea—there was no time in harbour—the bo'sun's mate would pipe the call "boys of the watch below to school;" so instead of being able to lie down and have a nap, like the men, so as to be ready for keeping the first watch on deck, the boys had to go aft, outside the stokers' mess, to learn geography!

It was hard lines on the few boys, who had not yet been rated "Ordinary Seamen," to sit there listless and half asleep, struggling to pay attention to the schoolmaster, until released by the bo'sun's mate's call "Hand of a mess for biscuits." As boys are the general servants of the mess, we had to fetch our daily rations. It was part of a schoolmaster's duty to make the "responses" to the chaplain during Divine Service. He had also charge of the ship's library. On Sunday afternoon he issued books to any man requiring one. Not a bad job on the whole, and with the pleasure of seeing the world thrown in!

I was always very fond of reading, and used to take a book from the library every week; this was a source of recreation which I enjoyed. I must have read most of the books during the four years we were away

from England, always selecting those of a historical nature.

In those days the inside of a ship was lit with candles, each mess being allowed a few small candles, known as "Purser's dips," to last the week. The police lanterns were fitted with a spring socket to hold a candle to burn eight hours. In order to light up the mess deck, large lamps were secured to brackets close down to the deck, there being one on each side of the cook's galley, facing forward. These large lamps had a glass front and sides. The glass front was twelve inches long and ten inches high, with a candle in it to burn for twelve hours; the lamp being provided with a large reflector behind, would throw a bright light along the deck. I often think of the many hours I have spent when in harbour, reading in front of one of these large lamps.

After the rounds had gone, and everyone not on duty had turned in for the night, I would creep aft and stretch myself on the deck, devouring the contents of a book. When I was detailed for duty to fetch officers off from shore at night, I was allowed to remain there until required. At other times the person for whom I had to look out was the Corporal of the Gangway, with his lantern in his hand, going the rounds every hour to see if everything was correct on the lower deck. On hearing his footsteps I would sneak around to the other side of the cook's galley until he had passed by. I would then return to my former place, sometimes remaining there until one or two in the middle watch, feeling very sleepy and very loath to turn out when hands were called at 5.30 a.m., the bo'sun's mate going around the deck shouting, "All hands, rise and shine."

CHAPTER XII

A VISIT TO MALDONADO AND ITS SEQUEL

AFTER the Flying Squadron had left Montevideo, the *Amethyst* weighed anchor and put to sea for a short cruise under sail, and after working our way down the coast, spending a week at sea, we arrived at Maldonado.

Maldonado is situated on the north shore, near the entrance to the River Plate. Just off Maldonado Point there is a small island, close to which we dropped anchor. Parties of officers frequently landed for snipe shooting, or potting at any old thing that came along, I taking them ashore in the skiff and generally going with them to carry the game bag.

While exploring the island, I noticed a few houses or shanties on the north side behind some sand-hills. What the people did for a living it was impossible to say, as they seemed to keep under cover when the officers approached. There was a lovely stretch of sand on the south side; a splendid spot for bathing, and the captain gave instructions that any of the ship's company wishing to land for a bathe could do so after evening quarters, taking the cutters to land for an hour's splash about. Men had been going ashore for about a week when a shoal of dog-fish, as big as small sharks, appeared on the scene, swimming about on the out-skirts of the bathers, who very quickly came out of the water, and stood watching the rapidly moving fins of the fish as they appeared above the water. The bathers, rather than run any risk of the dog-fish attacking them, decided

to leave well alone, so dressed themselves and returned on board, reporting the fish to the officer of the watch. No more bathing took place after that.

Our captain, as Commodore in charge of the station, must have sent instructions to the other ships on the station, to assemble at Maldonado for inspection and general exercises. At all events, about a week after our arrival, two gunboats, H.M.S. *Ready* and *Cracker*, arrived on the scene, followed two days later by H.M. gunboat *Dart*, making with the *Amethyst* quite a small fleet. They were the only ships stationed on the south-east coast of America, protecting the interests of the country, from the Amazon to the Falkland Islands.

Commodore Chatfield inspected his little fleet, spending the whole forenoon on each ship in turn, giving them a shake up at "general quarters," gunnery exercises and drill aloft. After the ships had been inspected, the Commodore decided to have a "general landing day." The signal was made that a landing of small-arm companies would take place on the island the next day at 9 a.m., the landing parties to be fully equipped with ammunition, water carriers and stretcher parties. The men's dinners were to be made over night and taken on shore with them, provision being made to warm them up, as it was intended to spend the whole day on shore.

When the bugle sounded the "assembly" next morning, our men quickly fell into their places and were inspected and "proved." We looked fine in our white gaiters, bound with blue jean and dungaree; the natty little flaps fitting over the boot like a gentleman's spats. With rifles in hand, and brightly polished cutlasses hanging by our sides, we looked fit for anything.

When all the men from the different ships were landed and had been formed into companies, we made up quite a battalion. Our first lieutenant, who was a gunnery officer, and very smart, took command. He

had the battalion knocked into shape in a very short time. We were kept on the go until 10.30, when we stood easy piling arms. When the "assembly" was sounded, and the men had closed up round their arms, blank ammunition was served out, twenty rounds per man. The gunnery officer then addressed the battalion, telling the men that they were going to practise the "attack." The ship's company of the *Amethyst* were to form the firing line, while men from the gunboats were to act as the supports and reserves. We were to attack an imaginary fort, indicated by a flag which was secured to a staff stuck in the ground on a small hill.

Our fellows advanced in an extended order, and as we got closer to the flag we were reinforced by the supports, and then by the reserves. Cutlasses were then fixed, and the "charge" sounded on the bugle. You should have heard the yell they gave as the line rushed forward. After "capturing" the fort the companies were re-formed and marched over to where it was intended to dine. Cooks "fell out" to prepare the spot for their own messmates, while arms were piled and belts and leather gear put over the muzzles of the rifles to prevent them from falling in the sand. We bivouaced on the sand, each ship's company forming a separate camp. The officers from the different ships joined up together, having quite a pleasant picnic.

The sergeant of marines was instructed to post a sentry near the houses during the dinner hour, so as to prevent any of the men mixing with the natives; several high sand-banks completely shutting off the shanties from the camp.

The first sentry to be posted was a huge, powerful fellow, named Bob Burrows; he was just the type of man to have on the end of the rope in a tug-of-war team, and whose voice, when speaking to you, seemed to come from the back of his neck! He was invariably good-tempered and jolly.

Visit to Maldonado

Bob related the following story to me a month or so after he had done his bit. When he first appeared on the scene he saw the heads of two people peering around the corner of one of the shanties. He started marching up and down on his beat, as it were, when one of the natives held out a bottle. That was enough! He soon picked up the scent, and was inside that house in a very short time!

We often had a laugh over it afterwards. Old Bob was placed there to prevent other men from entering the houses, and he was the first to fall. At 12.30 another marine was sent to relieve him, to enable him to get his dinner. He searched around for him, and at last located him in one of the houses, quite happy by himself with a bottle of "cania" in front of him; so he joined in with Bob, instead of going on sentry. After the men had their dinner and grog, some stretched out for a sleep; others strolled about the island in little groups, the old stagers nosing around for what they could find, and, of course, gradually approaching closer to the shanties! Seeing no sentries about, they walked over to one of the houses from which they heard the sound of voices. On opening the door they found the two marines sitting on chairs like twin souls of Bacchus, with a bottle and glasses in front of them. The others soon joined in, and were served the same. The news soon went round among the other men who were strolling about the island away from the camp. Some bought a bottle and cleared out, going in little groups to a quiet spot, where they sat drinking the rotten native spirit. It was awful stuff, regular "dope," and practically poison, acting on its victims a couple of hours or so after it had been drunk, according to the quantity taken. When the "assembly" was sounded after dinner the men fell in and mustered. Those not in the know fancied there was something wrong with some of the men near them.

As soon as the battalion got on the move it was noticed that several of the men were rather shaky on their feet, but they managed to keep going until "stand easy." As soon as we were dismissed, the two marines who had been on sentry, and several others, flopped down on the sand. They were asleep, and dead to the world in a very short time. The dope was doing its duty! The assembly having been sounded, several men failed to answer the call. There they remained stretched out, and it was found impossible to rouse them. The companies were then closely inspected by the officers, who found that some thirty or forty men were in a semi-drunken state. The officers were completely taken by surprise; they had not the faintest idea that drink could be procured on the island. Whenever they had landed to do a little shooting never a soul could be seen, the sandhills in the centre obscuring the shanties from the camp, and as a sentry had been posted it was considered that everything would be all right.

Drills had to cease, and everything be packed up, all of us returning to the ships, the men from the gunboats being marched to their boats by their own officers. Nothing appeared to be wrong with them as they marched in a quiet and orderly manner; probably they were more wide awake to the effects of drinking the native spirits.

The fact was, their ships were small ones which generally would anchor close in, so they would, of course, have greater facilities for going on shore and sampling the local liquor than our own men, who never had much chance to indulge themselves and to gain sufficient knowledge of the terrible effects of drinking the native spirit neat—as several of them did.

The stretcher party had to carry those who were dead asleep down to the boat, where they were laid out like sardines. There they remained until hoisted inboard in a bowline by the yard whip. It was funny

to see some of them jump off the stretcher, and then in their dazed state tackle the men who were carrying them.

I remember seeing poor old "Shanghai" Gibbs, who had a nose like a jib sail when set. He was down on his knees with his head and nose stuck in the sand. He was picked up insensible and carried to the boat.

A man named Hill, an A.B., had a narrow escape from a serious accident. A rifle loaded with blank was fired quite close to his head, which marked him for life on one side of his face with blue specks from the powder. Only one of the leading hands got into trouble, viz., Bob Mills, the first lieutenant's coxswain, who went nearly mad from the effects of the stuff. He flung his rifle into the water, saying he had finished with soldiering. When brought before the captain, he lost two good conduct badges. At last we arrived on board, where we were inspected, and the names of those found to be under the influence of drink were written down. We were then dismissed, the helpless ones being taken below by their messmates. There were several sore heads the next morning, some of the men being unable to shake off the effects of the dope.

About forty men were warned to appear on the quarter-deck at 11 a.m. When they had been mustered, the master-at-arms reported to the first lieutenant, who dealt with the minor cases. The more serious cases were referred to the captain's judgment the next day.

"Defaulters" having sounded, the next forenoon the men lined up on the quarter-deck as before. The captain had every man before him in turn, weighing the evidence against each one very carefully. They were punished accordingly. Those who were brought on board insensible, and who had good conduct badges, lost them. Old Bob, the sentry, dropped two badges and had fourteen days' "10.A." Those who had no

badges, had cells, or fourteen days' "10.A.," others getting seven or ten days.

For at least a fortnight after it was like a picnic between the guns before the gangway, over twenty men having their meals there, under the sentry's charge. No grog for them! and they were kept going by the master-at-arms and Corporal Mooney until their time was up. As we had only one cell in the ship, it took a long time to get through them all.

The landing on Lobis Island was always referred to afterwards as the "can you war," a pun on the name of the native spirit, Cania. The gunboats took their departure, going to their respective parts of the station, and about a week after we left for Montevideo, picking up our old billet under the Mount.

CHAPTER XIII

A WINTER ON THE RIVER PLATE

It was drawing towards winter, and we were experiencing rather rough weather; sometimes dragging our anchor owing to the shallow water under the Mount.

The captain decided to move the ship out into deeper water, so steam was raised and we moored ship out near the Flores Lighthouse, where we remained for three months. The yarn went around the lower deck that the captain moved out there in order to punish the men for their drunken escapade at Maldonado. But the more probable reason was that owing to the unsettled state of the Argentine and Uruguay in that year—1875—frequent disturbances were breaking out among the populations of both countries. There was also trouble between Uruguay and the Brazilians, who intended to land, but were prevented by the action of our captain.

He thought it his duty to remain in the River Plate and protect British interests.

It was hard lines on both officers and men to be tied up six miles from Montevideo, our only recreation, when fine, being drill and plenty of it, though our minstrel party helped to pass the time away. I remember they used the words: "Winter may come! but the birds will sing again!"

The officers generally took advantage of any spell of fine weather to take a run ashore, using the old

Mocking Bird; with her cork belt she was perfectly safe. The men were granted forty-eight hours' leave to each watch once only, as it was rather risky for a large number of men to be out of the ship at one time, owing to the uncertainty of the weather.

They managed to take the cutter and get fresh beef and soft bread twice a week, taking the officers' stewards in to replenish stores. Whenever we had a spell of fine weather the parson used the skiff for a little fishing, I generally pulling the boat over near the rocks surrounding the lighthouse, which was not very far from the ship. I was always glad to go with him, as it made a little change for me, with the added prospect of fresh fish for tea.

During the month of August the chaplain's fishing was ended for a time by a specially stiff pampero, which finished the skiff. We had previously lost our copper punt, a small flat-bottomed boat used for cleaning the copper and outside of the ship. She was washed away in a rough sea. I had several close shaves with the skiff, but always just managed to get her hooked on before the sea became too much for me. The dinghy was being used to clean the outside of the ship, one afternoon, when it came on to blow, the glass falling rapidly. All boats' crews were called away to hook their boats on, to be hoisted out of the water. I took the skiff around to the starboard cat-head davit, where she was hoisted up.

One of the side party, old Jock Ayres, a "bounty" man, had a most miraculous escape. He had got into the dinghy to hook her on, and was dropping her astern to her davits in the waist of the ship, when the sea took charge, knocking the boathook out of his hand; he was left helpless, and was being driven astern. The signalman of the watch, F. Carnell, seeing his plight, had the presence of mind to make a running bowline with a large eye, in the after main-brace fall. Just as Jock got clear of the counter, Carnell hove

the bowline, which fortunately went around Jock Ayre's body, and hauled him out of the boat. The dinghy was never seen again.

As the afternoon was closing in, the force of the wind increasing and the glass still falling, the captain decided to strike lower yards and the topmast so as to make snug for the night. As the wind increased, causing the seas to break over the fo'c'sle, steam was raised and the sheet anchor let go. An anchor watch was kept throughout the storm, and we spent the night riding out the gale or pampero with three anchors down and steaming against it.

The next morning the wind had gone down a bit, but there was a heavy sea running. I went on the fo'c'sle to see how the skiff had fared. She was gone from the davits. Seeing some men looking up at the fore-rigging I glanced up and saw the skiff, or what remained of her, cut fairly in two from bow to stern; the port side of her was gone completely, but the starboard side of her was by some means caught in the upper part of the fore-rigging under the futtock shrouds, her bows pointing forward.

The skiff must have been lifted bodily by the force of the wind, and on striking the fore-rigging was cut in halves, the curves of the starboard bow and a couple of thwarts having caught in the rigging and held on. That finished our small boats! During that winter we lost the copper punt, dinghy and skiff. I was very sorry at losing the skiff, for I enjoyed going away with the parson fishing, watching while he sat puffing away at his pipe, without saying a word.

Every lane has its turning, and our turn had come at last. The people on shore seemed to have settled their differences, and things were normal again, with the result that we were busy getting ready to leave Montevideo for Rio de Janeiro. Everyone in the ship was glad to get away after the terrible shake up we had

experienced in the River Plate. At last we unmoored ship and sailed away in the first week of September. When we got out of the river and headed towards Rio we caught a gentle breeze which carried us into warmer weather. What a relaxation it was, sailing along under plain sail, each day getting warmer and warmer.

An inner jib stay for hoisting another jib was secured to the topmast head and set up through a block halfway along the jib-boom, enabling the ship to carry four head sails. She looked a picture with all her sails full.

The day before I became of age to be rated a "man," a curious accident occurred to our bowsprit. The ship was sailing along on the starboard tack with an easy breeze, when suddenly the bowsprit snapped off short about six feet from the stem of the ship. The booms, with their sails set, fell into the sea and were carried by the wind and the way of the ship around the port side, but without doing any serious damage, as the head yards were braced forward. The stays of mast and booms glided along the yards until they were brought up. Sail was shortened and steam raised; the head yards were braced sharp up so as to allow the spars to come along-side. The look-out man at the mast-head told me that when he heard the snap he quickly got into the topmast rigging, getting down as fast as he could before the weight of the booms and sails were brought on to the mast-head. He was afraid the mast would go, but nothing happened except a severe shaking.

The wreckage was soon cleared, and the spars hoisted inboard, the upper mast and yards sent down, and topmast and jib-stays were set up to the stump of the broken bowsprit.

The next day, September 14th, 1875, I passed for Ordinary Seaman, the bo'sun taking me on the fo'c'sle, where I was questioned about the fittings of the spars and sails that had been carried away and was also examined

by questions about other parts of the ship. I then had to appear before the captain to be rated. What a change from the present day! My pay was increased from sevenpence to one shilling and a penny per day. Shortly afterwards I passed for trained man in gunnery, making my pay one shilling and twopence per day. Shall I ever forget the feeling of shyness that came over me when I arrived in my mess for dinner as a "man"? I had finished with the drudgery of a mess-boy and all that it meant, and in future I would have more time to myself. I was entitled to all the privileges of a Man in Her Majesty's Navy; being allowed to take up one pound of tobacco each month from the purser. I never smoked until I was thirty, so I had no use for it. I was also allowed half a gill of rum each day. I had that! Although rated as a man in the service, my real age at the time was only sixteen years and six months. I was gradually overcoming my handicap of age, and was growing a fine, upstanding youth.

The ship was only a few day's steaming from Rio at the time of the accident to the bowsprit, and we arrived there, mooring just inside the Island Fort.

It is strange how some places appeal to one more than to others. I always liked the harbour of Rio, perhaps because I was so fond of getting about in the skiff, being quite expert with a pair of paddles. I was indeed glad when the officers bought another; she was a nice boat, though rather heavier than her predecessor, but I was pleased to see that she was fitted with mast and sails. Nothing suited me better than to hoist the sail when taking officers on shore or bringing them back to the ship.

A new bowsprit was made on shore, brought off and fitted, the outer spars being replaced and rigging set up as before. I think the carpenter managed to procure a new dinghy and copper punt from the old store ship *Egremont*.

After coaling ship, forty-eight hours' general leave was granted to each watch, which was much welcomed by the men. My chum, Dubby Dorman, and I, being in the same watch, embraced the opportunity to spend a couple of nights ashore, the first since we left England, fifteen months ago.

While bringing officers on board late one night I could not help hearing their conversation. It was generally about an opera they had been to see; so I made up my mind that whenever I had the chance I would go also. Dubby and I went on shore with the other men on general leave, but we went off on our own, wandering around the city seeing the sights. We discovered the Opera House, noted the time of opening and bought tickets. On entering the House later we were shown to a seat in a small box overlooking the stage, and about four tiers up.

The opera that night was *Faust*. I never in the course of my young life had had the chance of seeing anything like the scene before us. We were fairly fascinated with the splendour of it all; the brilliant lights, the beautiful dresses, both on and off the stage; and the grand singing. We could not understand the play itself, but we much appreciated the music. We went again the next night, returning on board at the expiration of our leave, having thoroughly enjoyed the novelty of it.

The ship's company enjoyed a very quiet time while lying at Rio in comparison with what we had had at Montevideo and the River Plate, especially as the first lieutenant changed the harbour routine. Instead of keeping all hands employed pottering about on deck all day, he called the watch forenoons and afternoons—the same as we did at sea. The men felt very grateful for the concession, which made them happy and contented. They reckoned that the captain had forgiven them for the "can you war."

Winter on the River Plate

I went on many pleasant trips with some of the officers, sailing around in the skiff to the little bays and islands on the starboard side of the harbour. Dr. Cox and the Assistant Paymaster, Mr. Nash, used the skiff most frequently; at other times I would take a party of them ashore for a swim or for a picnic as before, a happy time for me.

The chaplain used to content himself with fishing from the poop. Some afternoons, when the skiff would not be required, he would tell me to bring the boat to the gangway; he would then get into her with his fishing gear, pipe and pouch; then he would drop the boat astern and tie her up to the ship's side and commence fishing. I have seen him sitting in the sternsheets of the skiff with a line in each hand, his pipe in his mouth, and sound asleep!

The bumboats that came off to the ship during the dinner hour with fruit, eggs and other delicacies for sale, also brought off what I have only seen in one other part of the world, viz., China. These were small earthenware bowls of oysters out of their shells. The bowls contained, according to size, twenty-five, fifty or a hundred oysters. They were fairly cheap. I think for a silver milreis—about two shillings and threepence—one could buy a bowl of fifty oysters, which were greatly appreciated with plenty of pepper and vinegar.

A rumour went around the ship that the *Amethyst* was to be transferred to the Pacific Station. The news was confirmed when our captain received his orders by the next mail. We were all very pleased, for although we were going further away from England, we knew the Pacific was a more pleasant station to be on. I was delighted when I heard the news, and looked forward to seeing more of the world; there were so many more places to visit than on the south-east coast of America.

CHAPTER XIV

OUR VOYAGE TO THE PACIFIC THROUGH THE STRAITS OF MAGELLAN

We bade farewell to Rio de Janeiro on the 4th, November, 1875, and commenced our long voyage to the Pacific. I had spent many happy hours in Rio notwithstanding my shake up on the rocks around the fort, and I much enjoyed my little trips in the skiff, especially when on my own.

The paymaster provided for the inner man, sending the ship's steward on shore to arrange for fresh beef and soft bread to be brought off shore the day before we sailed. The first lieutenant kindly allowed the caterers of messes to go ashore, to lay in a stock for their messes. It was a great boon to the men, as it would be the only chance of getting fresh provision until we arrived at Valparaiso.

Weighing anchor, we steamed by the island fort and through the entrance to the open sea, making sail when clear of the harbour. We had a pleasant journey to Montevideo, our first "milestone." Arrangements were made here for coaling ship, taking in as much as the bunkers would hold, as there was some hard steaming in front of us, especially as we had to get through the Magellan Straits and Smyth's Channel. Captain Chatfield took no risk of running short.

It was the usual practice in those days for ships that ran short of coal when going through the Straits to send parties of men on shore at each anchorage to cut

Glaciers in the Magellan Straits

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down sufficient wood to eke out their coal supply, so as to enable the ship to get to the open sea.

The ship left Montevideo, November 18th. We enjoyed the run to the Straits, though we noticed the weather was getting colder each day. A few men had bought parrots while at Rio, and the poor birds were feeling the cold as we approached the Magellan Straits, requiring a lot of nursing to keep them alive owing to the sudden change in the climate. It was really amusing to hear the owners of the birds trying to teach them to speak. The captain of the "hold," known as "Tanky," who had charge of the provisions stowed in the hold and looked after the fresh water tanks, had a very funny bird. The only words old Tanky could make him say were "I'll fly, I'll fly." He used to put his bird on the "compressor fall" on the lower deck among the men. As the weather got colder, Tanky's bird lost all its feathers, leaving only the ribs and trucks of his wings. The parrot would strut up and down the compressor fall, cocking his head on one side, as if it were trying to catch a word from the men, then you would hear a shrill shriek: "I'll fly, I'll fly," at the same time flapping the ribs and trucks of its wings. The men would roar with laughter at its antics. Unfortunately it died shortly afterwards.

We entered the Magellan Straits at 6 a.m., just as we had finished scrubbing decks. The scenery was very bleak. The rocks on our right were swarming with what were said to be sea horses, or sea lions; a kind of walrus. We found the air very keen as we had only recently left Rio, which is just within the tropics, and the weather was steadily getting colder as we proceeded on our journey through the Straits. With the ship steaming fast through the water, and a strong head wind blowing, it was very cold for the leadsmen in the chains who were calling out the soundings, or depth of water as shown by the leadline. They were

relieved every half-hour instead of remaining the usual hour, and when they came out of the chains they were covered with a coating of white salt, showing how very salt the water was in that part of the world.

We arrived at Punta Arenas or Sandy Point, November 30th, but only remained there a day and a night, getting under way early next morning, and speeding along on our journey.

I shall always remember the grandeur of the aspect as we steamed by the southern shores of the continent of America. Any attempt on my part to describe the beautiful scene would only fail. The sun was shining on the glaciers, radiating most beautiful colours. I stood gazing at the scene until we were out of sight.

When we anchored for the night, a few canoes with natives of Tierra-del-Fuego, or Land of Fire, came hovering round the ship. They looked very dirty crouching down in their boats, and appeared to be very small people. The Island of Tierra-del-Fuego is on the south of Magellan Straits, and extends south to Cape Horn. I was told that the people of the island divided themselves into three groups: one to cultivate the land, another to go hunting, and the third to go fishing, bringing all to a common pool, or share out, of the whole tribe.

Leaving the Magellan Straits we entered a narrow Sound known as Smyth's Channel. We had to steam hard each day from one anchorage to another, anchoring by night. Some parts of the Channel were very narrow, the high mountains appearing to close right in on us. They were very thickly wooded, the trees growing close to the water's edge and away up out of sight.

Captain Chatfield generally managed to anchor for the night in some quiet little bay surrounded by high trees, where sufficient wood could be cut to carry the ship through the Straits to the open sea if required.

A View of the Magellan Straits
with Glaciers in the distance

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Voyage to the Pacific

One evening, we at anchor, a large canoe with five natives came alongside the ship to barter skins. They were a different type from those seen in the Magellan Straits. These were Patagonians, fine tall people. The women wore a large skin over their shoulders in the form of a robe, which completely covered their bodies. Their great desire was to exchange skins for soap or knives, and several bargains were struck.

In the Navy, soap was always issued in three-pound bars, a bar of which could be exchanged for a decent sized skin. They seemed to be very keen on Navy soap. What they used it for, goodness only knows! It certainly wasn't to wash their "undies!" It may be added that the women wore nothing whatever under their skin robe. If offered sufficient soap they would take off the robe and exchange.

Weighing anchor early the next morning, we steamed full speed for the open sea. Just about noon the look-out man at the masthead reported a boat right ahead. When we closed on it she proved to be a man-of-war's boat, the crew fully armed. The captain stopped the ship in order to allow the boat to come alongside. An officer came on board having a bundle of letters and despatches with him. He was a French Naval Officer, who could not speak English. One of our officers—I think Lieutenant F. E. W. Lambert—acted as interpreter when the officer reported to the captain. The news filtered through the ship to the men forward that the boat belonged to a French gunboat which was on a voyage home to France. While under sail she had encountered a terrible gale, which carried away her topmast and upper spars, and blew the sails to ribbons. Her captain worked his ship to one of the creeks in the Straits, deciding to refit his ship there, the crew being employed in cutting down trees to make new spars. The *Amethyst* was the only ship sighted during the time she had been laid up, few ships passing that way in the

year 1875. Mail boats and vessels which could not steam fast went straight through the Magellan Straits without venturing through the narrows of Smyth's Channel.

On reaching the open sea we made all sail to assist the engines in running up the coast. It was not many days before we sighted Valparaiso, arriving there on Sunday, December 19th. We posted the letters here that had been left with us by the French officer.

The city of Valparaiso lay back in an open bay. We moored ship over on the right side at a convenient distance from the shore.

Christmas Day being near at hand, very little was done in the way of drills, so we had an easy time of it, and everybody on the lower deck set about getting the decorations ready for their messes. The caterers of messes were allowed to go on shore with the stewards in the morning, the old hands of the mess telling the caterer what to bring off. They intended to have a regular beano after their six weeks' trip!

When the day arrived the messes were tastefully decorated, and the tables loaded with good things which had been brought off by the caterers. Each mess was ready to receive the captain and officers, who carried out the usual routine of making a tour of inspection of the mess-deck, tasting the puddings and having a word of greeting for each mess. A procession was formed by the band of our Negro Minstrels, playing the "Roast Beef of Old England," and the "sweepers" in grotesque fancy dress, sweeping away another year of time!

When dinner was over we spent the afternoon in fun and jollity; during the evening we had dancing and singing on the upper deck, all hands joining in the choruses, and making the harbour ring with the sound of their voices.

After Christmas was over, the ship was coaled and cleaned down. Then forty-eight hours' leave was given

to each watch, to see what Valparaiso was like. I followed the example of several others and put up at the Shakespeare Hotel, kept by Dan O. Sullivan, who was a real friend to British sailors, naval or mercantile. The hotel had a fine dance hall, with a long bar where one could get a glass of decent beer, and a swing around with a pretty little Spanish girl! Can you blame us for seizing the opportunity of taking the good things the gods sent us? Remember, we had not been outside the ship since the latter part of October, over two months.

Old Dan told us there was a room upstairs used by the people for Spanish dances. He said if any one cared to see the dancing he would arrange for them to be admitted. A few of us expressed a wish to see the dances, so about 8 p.m. we were shown into a large room crowded with Chileans, men and women, in fancy dresses. Seats were placed around the room, leaving the centre clear. We sat watching four couples dancing what was known as the Fandango. The partners faced each other, stepping it out and swinging around, as they do in a "reel," to the music of several guitars. The lady partner held aloft a small handkerchief.

It was interesting to watch the graceful movements of the dancers, the lady twirling her "hankie," but we soon got tired of merely watching! The dancing below being more in our line, we were soon in the thick of it, and thoroughly enjoying ourselves.

Returning on board when our leave expired, we settled down quite contented, and continued our regular drills to keep us fit. I was kept busy in the skiff, which I did not mind in the least.

I think we remained five weeks at Valparaiso, and then sailed for Coquimbo (Serena), a place further up the coast. Coquimbo at that time was used by the ships on the southern part of the Pacific Station as their head-quarters. H.M.S. *Nereus*, an old two-decker,

was stationed there as a store ship. There was an extempore rifle range on the rocks running out to a point. While there we carried out target practice with our heavy guns, using rocks in the bay as targets.

What changes have taken place since the old *Amethyst* carried out target practice with her fourteen 64-pounder muzzle loading guns! Her guns were mounted on wooden carriages supported on wide wooden trucks, the guns being kept in the firing position by tackles having huge 13-inch double blocks, and the guns trained and laid for the object by wooden hand-spikes six feet long. Our fellows, through constant practice, could handle their handspikes like billiard cues! They had acquired the exact touch to heave her, either to the right or left, or raise or lower for elevation according to the signal made by the captain of his gun. When the gun was fired, it would recoil on its wooden trucks, or be pulled back with preventer tackle so as to bring the muzzle well inside the open port, the breeching preventing the gun from recoiling too far. When sponged and loaded, the gun would be hauled out in the firing position by tackle, the captain of the gun often having a difficult job to pick up the target again. In those old days, when carrying out Prize Firing each gun was limited to eight rounds, to be fired at the target as the ship steamed past. The crew of the gun who fired the eight rounds in the quickest time and who scored the most hits won the prize.

One of our bo'sun's mates, Bobby Sargent, won the first prize with the very smart work of his gun's crew, who fired the eight rounds in four minutes, ten seconds; and scored five hits. His time was the smartest in the Navy for the year 1876, though several of the other crews ran him very close.

The first lieutenant often exercised our men, boxing the guns about, up and down the deck, with handspikes only, just like a game of draughts or checkers! What a

contrast to target practice as carried out from a six-inch quick-firing gun mounted on a central pivot mounting. The No. 1, or gun-layer, as he is now known, can have a joy ride on a platform travelling round a ring of live rollers, i.e., without axles, and with a rubber shoulder piece to keep him upright. His eye is glued on his object through the telescopic sight, his right hand on the pistol grip, forefinger around the trigger ready at the proper time to give it a gentle pressure, the idea being to fire as many rounds and to score as many hits as possible in a given time. Having been gunnery instructor for eighteen years, I can claim to have a good understanding of the great strides made in naval gunnery since those old days. I can also judge of the smartness of Bobby Sargent's gun-crew in firing eight rounds in four minutes, ten seconds, under the conditions then in use. After completing target practice we returned to Coquimbo to wait for three midshipmen expected to arrive from England in H.M.S. *Opal* to relieve three of our midshipmen who had attained the age to attend Greenwich College as sub-lieutenants.

The *Opal* arrived in the early part of March. I remember that while the two ships lay at Coquimbo the men of both fraternised at a distance by singing songs every evening between seven and nine o'clock. Each ship would sing in turn, all hands from both ships joining in the chorus. The words could be heard distinctly in both ships. It made the time pass very pleasantly.

CHAPTER XV

A TRIP FROM VALPARAISO TO VANCOUVER ISLAND

In the spring of 1876, Captain Chatfield received orders to proceed north to Vancouver Island, via the coast, visiting all the principal ports on the way.

A grand trip this of nearly seven thousand miles, a sufficient distance to fire the imagination and to satisfy—for the time—the wanderlust of any lad. I was delighted when I heard that we were to make this cruise, and to be able to see so many types of people. I borrowed an atlas from the schoolmaster, and spent many hours in following our course up the coast; picking out the different places at which we were to call. Something like ten or twelve republican countries were situated on that long coast line, and I believe we called at no less than fifty-four ports on our journey to Vancouver.

As I do not feel quite capable of properly describing the different places, I will content myself with relating to you, as well as I can, what most impressed itself on my mind during our brief visit to each port.

Leaving Valparaiso, we steamed up the coast, calling at several places until we arrived at Iquique, a town on the coast of Peru which has since become Chilean. It must have suffered a terrible disaster through an earthquake, for one half of the town was completely submerged, probably by a tidal wave. We called next at Pisagua, where desperate fighting took place afterwards during the Peruvian and Chilean war. We also called

at Arica, where an American ship was carried for a distance of five miles inland by the same tidal wave that played such havoc at Iquique and other coast towns. On reaching Callao, the seaport of Lima, the capital of Peru, we coaled ship, staying there a week, which gave the officers plenty of opportunities of visiting the city, which was only a short journey by train.

I had often heard of what was known as "Peruvian dew," and while laying at Callao we had a sample of it every evening between four and five o'clock. A damp, dirty mist would creep over the harbour, completely enveloping it, but not like our old Scotch mist, wet but clean. Peruvian dew, at the time we were there, covered everything with which it came into contact with a coating of dirty-looking stuff, turning the white paint a yellowish colour, which had to be washed off every morning before the sun had a chance of grafting it on!

The men on the lower deck were really glad to leave Callao, as leave was not granted to them while there. Callao, with its heavy dews, did not appeal to them, and we could only judge what sort of place it was by what we saw going around the ship, and from a distance. Callao has always been recognised by sailors for its slackness, a kind of "go-as-you-please" sort of place. One often heard the expression in the Navy when men were yarning about another ship: "Oh, it was a regular Callao, on board her!" meaning, of course, that the ship's company had easy times, the discipline not being strict.

Proceeding on our journey we arrived at Guayaquil. A pilot was taken on board here to navigate the *Amethyst* up the river, where we anchored in front of the city. We were told that our ship was the largest vessel which had visited Guayaquil for many years. It was very hot there during the day so awnings were spread to protect us from the sun, Guayaquil not being far from the Equator.

The city was on the left side of the river, which at that point was about half a mile wide. We had great fun watching boys, not very old, and absolutely naked, lying on their stomachs on a large piece of timber or trunk of a tree, and with a leg or arm on each side paddling away with arms and legs, propelling it across the river towards the city. Sometimes three or four boys could be seen stretched along a huge tree trunk, propelling it across, and making a big splash with a kind of over-hand stroke, their dark, naked bodies shining in the sun, which, by the way did not seem to have any effect on them.

As we spent Sunday there, the Roman Catholics were allowed to go ashore to Mass. When we landed in our white suits and straw hats the people stood about in little groups, watching us; I suppose the sight was quite a new one for them!

We left Guayaquil after a week's stay, and proceeded to Panama calling at various places on our way. Arriving at Panama, April 13th, we met H.M.S. *Repulse*, the flagship of Rear Admiral the Hon. A. A. L. P. Cochrane, who was the inventor of the collision mat.

The first time the upper yards and mast were sent down, the men of the *Repulse* were surprised at the smart way we carried out the evolution, and cleared down from aloft; after we had been there three days we were inspected by Admiral Cochrane. He seemed very pleased with our smartness at drill and with the cleanliness of the ship.

We soon ascertained that the *Repulse*, which I believe, was an old line of battle ship that had been cut down, was leaving for England in a few days, after a commission of five years. Just think what that meant to the husbands who had been parted from their wives and families for five long years! One can hardly imagine their feelings after so many years; how anxiously they must have counted the days, and followed the

tracing of the chart on the journey home from Panama. What a change for the better has taken place in the Navy since those old days! The ships of the present day can go round the world in the same time that it took a ship like the *Repulse* to arrive home from Panama.

Before she left, several ratings, mostly boys, were transferred to us in order to complete our complement; they were men and boys who had not been very long away from England.

When the *Repulse* left on her long, but most welcome voyage home, she flew her long "paying off" pennant, while we manned the rigging and gave her a hearty cheer, wishing her "God-speed."

After the inspection by the Admiral, a party of old A.B.'s were set about the job of making a collision mat from a design supplied by Admiral Cochrane, the inventor. It was made on a large square of No. 1 canvas, thrummed with rope-yarn, and was fitted with guys to haul it over the hole made in the ship by collision with another. Collision mats are now supplied ready-made and fitted by the dockyards.

We left soon after the *Repulse*, continuing our journey north, making calls at several places in Costa Rica and Guatemala, two little republics beyond Panama. From what we heard, there had been some trouble between the inhabitants and our Consuls, especially at San Jose in Costa Rica; there was a rumour that the people there had actually flogged the Consul!

The steam pinnace was hoisted out and towed astern of the ship while going from place to place. An officer in full rig, with cocked hat and slung sword, landed at each port. It was our job to demonstrate to the people of these South American countries the power of England. Having completed our job, the pinnace was hoisted inboard and we steamed on to Acapulco, a Mexican town of some importance, where there is a fine land-locked harbour with high, surrounding hills,

We remained there a few days, after which we proceeded to Mazatlan, another Mexican port, situated at the entrance of the Gulf of California, and a few days later proceeded up the gulf to a place called Guaymas.

We were running short of coal on account of so much steaming and visiting so many places; and the captain having been informed that our bunkers could be replenished with palm nuts at Guaymas, decided to go there and fill up as there was no chance whatever of getting any coal.

The palm nuts came alongside in large open boats, having very little freeboard; they were also very shallow. There was a slight breeze, the motion of the water causing the boats to roll a bit and making it a risky job filling the coal bags. Once the captain shouted to the men in the boat to be more careful in filling the bags, and not allow so many nuts to drop over the side. We took in a supply sufficient, together with the coal that we had left, to take us to San Francisco. It was the cleanest job of "coaling ship" I ever experienced; the bags of nuts after being hoisted in were just tipped down the bunker hatch without making any mess whatever.

We returned to Mazatlan and gave one day's leave to each watch: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., just to stretch their legs. While having a walk round, one could not help noticing the number of silversmith's shops in the place, containing all sorts of silver articles for sale, some of them beautifully chased; and anyone who happened to have plenty of gold coins in his pockets could easily pick up some bargains. Some of us who went into a shop to have a look around were offered articles worth double the money for the sake of getting a gold coin. The reason why silver was so plentiful and cheap was that there were several silver mines in the district. We were told that smuggling was carried on upon a big scale between agents on shore and ships

anchored in the harbour, the officials being "in the know." One could not help noticing the numerous little boats, with only one man in each, prowling in and out among the ships in the early hours of the morning.

Sometimes a guard-boat would appear on the scene, making a tremendous noise when their oars struck the water, giving due notice of their approach to all whom it might concern.

One old fisherman used to make a regular call at our ship during the dinner hour, whether he had fish or not for sale; sometimes he came inboard, and it was said that the same old chap used to run alongside during the silent hours of the night. We often wondered why a yard whip was always kept on the main yard, with a shot-net on its end, during the whole fortnight we remained there; and why the carpenters were employed in making small wooden boxes. This occurred many years ago, remember!

Leaving Mazatlan, we proceeded to San Francisco, that famous American city lying on the right bank of the Sacramento River. On our way up the river we passed the small town of Benicia, where Heenan, the boxer who fought Tom Sayers, hailed from. We anchored abreast of the city, in the centre of the river.

When Captain Chatfield went on shore in his galley to make his official visit, who should be sitting on the quayside, near the landing steps, but two men who had deserted from the *Amethyst* while at Montevideo. There they sat as bold as brass, laughing and chaffing our galley's crew. When the captain returned, Gus. Winter, his coxswain, pointed them out to him, but he could do nothing in the matter, because they were on American soil.

The Chief Engineer also landed, to make arrangements for coaling ship the next day. When the lighters arrived alongside, and before starting to coal ship, armed sentries were posted around the lighter

to prevent the men from deserting by jumping into small boats. It looked very strange to be coaling ship with marines on duty with fixed bayonets. Coaling finished, the master-at-arms, the ship's corporal, and a corporal of marines with lanterns searched every cranny and corner of the lighter before she cast off and was towed ashore.

All hands were busy scrubbing decks, when a petty officer reported that one of his men was missing. The lighter was ashore by this time. The master-at-arms was sent for, and he informed the first lieutenant that they had searched everywhere in the lighter. The missing man, whose name was Edgland, was an ordinary seaman, and would have remained one even if he had stayed in the Navy until he died; he was the sort of man who is always in trouble. He was considered "soft" or not too bright. From what happened you will say he was not so silly as he appeared.

One of his messmates lent him a new pair of boots to stretch, which he did by wearing them when coaling ship. When he cleared out the boots went with him. We learned afterwards how he managed to evade the search party.

It seems that Edgland had noticed a large tub standing in a corner with a big heap of bags belonging to the lighter stacked quite close to it. During the day he procured a plank of wood to place across the top of the tub to keep the weight of the sacks off. Just before we finished coaling, and while the men were tidying up, Edgland curled himself up inside the tub, having previously arranged with two of the lightermen to cover him over with the stack of spare bags, which they did, putting the tub completely out of sight. Whether he got ashore alive we never heard!

While at San Francisco, I used to while away my time in the evening by going on the fo'c'sle, and watching the steamboats crossing the river. What interested

me most was the large ferry boats with their huge engine beam working up and down, like a child's see-saw, and connected with the crank shaft which worked the paddle-wheels. They would appear very quaint if seen to-day.

Leaving San Francisco and proceeding on our journey, we experienced very rough weather. After the first day out it came on to blow hard, so the upper yards were sent down, the flying jib-boom rigged in, and the yards braced sharp up to the wind. We were shipping huge seas over the fo'c'sle, and as the wind had veered a point or two, the officer of the watch intended to hoist the jib to steady the ship in the heavy seas.

How well I remember the sad occurrence which ended the life of one of my topmates, whose name was Billy Stapleton. We were both youngsters in the same part of the ship. While yarning together in the middle watch (12 midnight to 4 a.m.), sitting on the slide of the fo'c'sle gun, Stapleton was constantly on the fidget. I chaffed him about wearing so many clothes. We were both barefooted, with trousers turned up as usual, but he was wearing a monkey jacket and a large muffler around his neck. I said, "Billy, suppose you were washed overboard, how would you get on, wrapped up as you are?" I remember his words in reply as if it happened yesterday; laying his hand on my thigh, he said, "Pat, whatever is going to happen, will happen, and I shall have to take my chance." It has often occurred to me since how strange he seemed while sitting there yarning; he seemed to be on wires, as if he anticipated something.

Just after seven bells, 3.30 a.m., we heard little Bobby Sargent, the bo'sun's mate, blow his whistle. Up jumped Billy, and ran up on the fo'c'sle before the words were out of the bo'suns' mate's mouth. It was an order for the fo'c'slemen to clear away the jib.

There were only a few of us in that part of the ship, as some, with our captain of the top, were on the sick list. I followed Stapleton up the ladder, and was going out on the boom, but was told to clear away the sheets and halliards. While I was doing so another topmate, Taff Kingslake, came up and went out on the boom to assist Stapleton. The watch had been called to hoist the jib when the ship plunged her bows right into the trough, shipping a terrific sea which swept the fo'c'sle and rushed along the deck like an avalanche.

When she rose again I found myself jammed against the fo'c'sle rail, near the fore-rigging, with my legs through the rail. Jewell, the acting captain of the fo'c'sle, was clinging to the ropes around the foremast. On looking towards the boom we saw Taff Kingslake about six feet up the jib-stay, where he had been lifted by the waves. He was hanging on like grim death, with cap gone and the water streaming off him. What we thought was Billy proved to be the flying-jib sail stowed under the boom. Jewell and I both shouted out "Man overboard," and rushed across the fo'c'sle, looking over the side and endeavouring to see him. Although there was such a terrible sea running, our old life-boat, the *Mocking Bird*, was lowered, the midshipman in charge making as thorough a search as the conditions would allow; the old boat riding the water like a cork. As dawn was now breaking, a signalman was sent aloft to make a thorough search with his glasses.

Billy Stapleton was never seen again; He must have been struck by the forefoot of the ship as she dipped the second time, and stunned.

The mishap cast quite a gloom over the ship for the time, as it was our first fatal accident since leaving home, but, like everything else at sea, the depression soon wore off.

In those days pensions were not allowed to widows or parents of men who lost their lives while on active

service. Whatever assistance was given was rendered by the subscriptions of the ship or fleet. Every officer and man in the *Amethyst* subscribed towards a fund for Stapleton's mother, who was a widow, the sum of eighty pounds being raised in the ship.

After the knocking about we had experienced, we were very glad when we entered the Strait of Juan de Fuca, which separates the Island of Vancouver from the mainland, and were safely anchored at Esquimalt.

CHAPTER XVI

OUR ARRIVAL AT ESQUIMALT, VANCOUVER ISLAND, JULY 7TH, 1876

On entering the harbour at Esquimalt, we passed the dockyard on our right, and moored ship not far from the guard-ship, H.M.S. *Rocket*. Esquimalt was not then recognised as the head-quarters of the Pacific Squadron as it became in later years, but a ship was always stationed there, ready to patrol the coast further north and to quell any disturbance among the Indians, who had been rather unsettled and required a certain amount of tact in handling.

After mooring ship, very little work but cleaning up was done that evening, as no doubt the captain and first lieutenant considered that the ship's company required a rest after the severe weather we had experienced on our passage from San Francisco.

Having had my tea I went on the fo'c'sle to survey our surroundings. Esquimalt has a fine spacious harbour, but what struck me most were the beautiful fir and other trees growing right around the harbour, their verdant green showing up as a background to the enclosed water. Not a dwelling could be seen in the whole circle until the eye met the buildings around the dockyard, though a few houses could be discerned near the landing-stage to the left of the dockyard. At that time of the evening not a boat was moving, but only the two ships, *Amethyst* and *Rocket* lying at anchor, and everything appeared calm and restful.

Arrival at Esquimalt

There were several canoes made fast to the *Rocket's* port boom, and these, I understood, were to enable the men to go fishing in their time off duty, there being plenty of salmon and other fish in the harbour. The men were also allowed to use the canoes instead of the service boats if they wished to go on shore. The *Rocket* was a very happy little ship, and so was the *Amethyst*, but not so much Callao as the *Rocket*.

The next morning the hands were busy hoisting out the necessary boats, the skiff among them; a small pair of davits having been rigged to ship in sockets abaft the starboard gangway to hoist her out of the water by night. The skiff was fitted with mast and sails, and nothing pleased me more than to sail along by myself, which I often did when returning after landing officers, or when going on shore to bring them off.

Everything was all bustle on board, getting ready to coal ship the next day, the lighter arriving alongside quite early and everyone going at it with a will to get the job over. What put plenty of vim into them was the fact that a hogshead of beer was brought off! The men who were coaling were allowed beer; and very fine beer it was, they said. It was considered a great favour, and our men appreciated it. The following week, after the ship had coaled and all stores had been replenished, Captain Chatfield granted the men four days' leave on shore to each watch, commencing at 9 a.m. Monday and returning on board 7 a.m. the following Friday; by which time all their money would be gone. The men were allowed to return on board by night if they wished to save a night's lodging, then they could go ashore again when they chose until their leave had expired. This is a most valuable concession to men who have not too much money to spend, especially when a ship's company pays off.

The next week the other watch had their turn. While on leave we naturally made several friends in the

places we frequented, so different from further south, where at many places we visited we could not make ourselves understood; but here, except for a few of the natives, everyone spoke English. We selected our special hotel or public-house in which to sleep, and take in wet or dry provisions; there was no other accommodation. While on leave I had my photograph taken, this being printed on a tin plate. After fifty-two years I still have this photograph in my possession, and am reproducing it in this book. You can see the style of cap, serge frock with the royal yard man's tuck over the top of the trousers, and also the low neck flannels, exposing a sea-going chest, worn at that time in the Navy.

There was a wide road about four miles long between Esquimalt and the city of Victoria, a few hotels and public-houses being scattered along the roadside, but no other dwellings. We were told by the people living there that the road was constructed by men from H.M.S. *Zealous*. No wonder a bluejacket is known as the handy man, able to turn his hand to any kind of job.

Both watches having had their leave, our usual routine went on very smoothly, my time being fully occupied in taking officers about in the skiff. One of my regular jobs was to take the junior surgeon, Dr. Cox, ashore once or twice a week to a small landing stage leading up to the hospital, which lay well back in a clearance in the woods, surrounded with high fir trees. I use to like those little trips in the forenoon, rowing the skiff slowly ashore and listening to the doctor yarning about Ireland and other subjects. Dr. Cox was a Trinity College man, therefore he knew what he was talking about. I was always interested in what he said.

While sailing or rowing the skiff to or from the shore I occasionally came across an Indian in his long canoe,

PHOTOGRAPH OF
THE AUTHOR AS AN ABLE SEAMAN
H.M.S. AMETHYST 1876

Face page 124

fishing; sometimes I saw a canoe with small branches of trees fixed to the prow of the boat, and forming a bower, so one day out of curiosity I rowed close over to a canoe to watch the Indian, and saw that he was sitting artfully concealed behind the branches with a shot gun by his side, the muzzle pointing through an opening in the green stuff. He had two strong twigs with lines attached, these being secured on each gunwale close to his hand.

He propelled his canoe slowly through the water with a long pole, the end of which was covered with very sharply pointed nails, and every time the Indian completed his stroke he had a knack of striking the middle part of his pole on the gunwale of the canoe. I soon saw his reason for doing so, for every now and again, as the end on which the nails were attached came out of the water, a few fish would be caught in its upward sweep, and by knocking the pole on the gunwale the fish would drop into the canoe, without troubling the Indian to look around or to take his eyes off a bird should one be in sight; or divert his attention from his salmon lines. My curiosity having been satisfied I cleared out, and never afterwards went near a canoe having green stuff fixed on the bows, but always gave it a wide berth, as I had no wish to spoil sport.

About the end of July a rumour went around the lower deck that the Governor of Canada intended paying a visit to Vancouver Island. Shortly afterwards the captain received instructions to proceed to San Francisco to embark the Governor General, Lord Dufferin, and his staff.

We sailed for San Francisco on August 3rd, arriving there four days later, but had to wait a few days for the Governor, as he had to come right across the United States to the Pacific coast; the Canadian Pacific Railway over the Rocky Mountains not being opened until several years later.

His lordship arrived on board in the evening of August 11th. He, Lady Dufferin, and three gentlemen formed the party, but it was decided not to sail until the next morning, no doubt owing to her ladyship feeling the strain of her long railway journey. Two cots were fixed up in the captain's upper cabin to be used as a sleeping apartment for Lord and Lady Dufferin, a 64-pounder gun separating the two cots; the lower cabin was set apart as their mess room. The members of the staff were fixed up in the ward-room, having to sleep in cots hung in the steerage outside the ward-room mess.

The news went around that the Governor-General intended to spend quite a long time in the *Amethyst*, it being his intention to make a tour of inspection of the towns and islands north of Vancouver.

The next morning we were up and doing, and at 7 a.m. we commenced to heave in the cable to weigh anchor, the capstan spinning round until we came to the last shackle, when the men on the capstan bars were brought up with a jerk. Heaving on the bars with all their strength, they brought the cable up and down, but could not budge the anchor off the ground, it having caught in cables or moorings.

As Lord Dufferin's arrangements were timed to a day, it was decided to leave the anchor behind for an American firm to raise for us while the ship was away. The slip was put on, and the first length of cable unshackled; a "watch buoy" was attached to the cable which had been eased out of the hawse-pipe, the slip was then knocked off, and out ran the cable with the buoy.

Steaming down the Sacramento River we made good headway till we got outside, when bad luck met us and we encountered rotten weather, right in our teeth. I felt sorry for poor Lady Dufferin. The officer of the watch did what he could to steady the ship, for she was

pitching badly, and shipping heavy seas over the fo'c'sle. We set the jib and topmast-staysail whenever the wind veered a few points aft, and often did we fo'c'slemen get drenched through while taking in or clearing away the headsails for hoisting.

Lady Dufferin had a most uncomfortable time in the captain's cabin; the hideous noise made by the propeller racing when out of the water as the bows dipped into the sea must have become unbearable to her, for the captain gave instructions for a temporary awning to be rigged up on the quarter deck, just abaft the mainmast. Her cot was brought out and rigged up, curtains being securely fixed around it, and her ladyship remained out there for the remainder of the journey to Cape Flattery.

I remember seeing Lady Dufferin, as the *Amethyst* entered the Strait of Juan-de-Fuca and came into smooth water, walking up the starboard poop-ladder, laughing and joking as if she were glad to be alive after her trying ordeal, but looking very pale. We were all very glad when we dropped anchor at 7 p.m. Lord and Lady Dufferin, with his staff, landed the next morning, August 16th, amidst the cheering of the people who had arrived from the city of Victoria and surrounding districts to give them a Royal welcome.

That morning I felt very queer, so went aft to the sick bay. On being examined by the doctor it was found I was suffering from a severe attack of rheumatic fever, brought on, I suppose, by getting wet through so often in trying to put the headsails on the ship so as to steady her a bit on our rough passage up.

I was packed off to the hospital at once, and put to bed. I was very disappointed at being done out of the trip around the islands. I heard later that the Governor-General, before embarking to go north, performed the ceremony of driving the first pile for the cofferdam to make the new graving dock.

Memories of a Blue-jacket

Lord Dufferin and his staff having embarked for his tour of inspection, the *Amethyst* steamed away from Esquimalt, while I lay in hospital feeling very ill. Unfortunately the fever had a good hold on me, and it was a fortnight before I had sufficiently recovered to be able to sit up in bed; however, I continued to mend, getting stronger every day. I was very pleased when I heard that the hospital had a decent library with a fine collection of books. The third week after being admitted into hospital I was strong enough to be allowed out of bed, when I soon picked up, and was soon able to sit out in the grounds amongst the fir trees, the fresh air working wonders with my naturally strong constitution, especially when the doctor put me on a diet of "full and beer," i,e., a pint of beer for dinner every day, with plenty of food. I soon shook off the effects of the fever, and could see myself growing bigger. The old sick-berth steward was a fatherly old man, kind and attentive to his patients.

When the ship returned to Esquimalt I was discharged from hospital as fit for duty. Lord and Lady Dufferin, with their staff, went on shore to spend a few days visiting the surrounding country while the ship was being coaled and stores taken on board for the return journey to San Francisco. I was very glad to be on board again, and was anxious to hear all about the trip up north. I need not tell you I had plenty of yarns told me about the different places the ship called at: Queen Charlotte's Island and other islands as well—the visiting of several towns in Queen Charlotte's Sound making me quite envious. I got hold of one of the captain's galley's crew and pumped him dry, as he, being in the boat which usually took Lord and Lady Dufferin on shore, was in the know. He told me that Lady Dufferin always insisted on going on shore at each place the ship visited. Sometimes, owing to the shallowness of the water, the galley could not close

in, so then she had to be carried from the boat on the arms of two of the crew to terra firma. The two sailors would roll up their trousers, jump over the side, then grip each other's hand to form a seat for her. She would then sit down on the "seat," laughingly place her arms around the jolly tars, and be carried ashore. They also told me of the grotesque figures seen in the Indian cemeteries, placed there, no doubt, to honour their dead. Also, the curious custom they had of flattening their children's foreheads from birth between two boards hinged in the centre. The ends were placed over the child's head, front and back, and they were then bandaged together so as to bring a pressure on the forehead, making it flat. I had noticed how flat the "cluches" faces were whilst I was in Esquimalt. It was their idea of beauty I suppose, very similar to the Chinese idea of bandaging the feet of their baby girls in order to make them small. The Chinese made such a good job of reducing the size of their girls' feet that it was impossible for them to walk about outside their houses without some support. Many times, while in China, I have seen girls dressed up like dolls, and with their faces powdered, being carried pick-a-back by coolies when paying a visit to neighbours.

Lord Dufferin embarked during the afternoon of September 20th, 1876. When he and his staff stepped on board, the *Amethyst* was looking spick and span, and with every rope as taut as a harp-string. Lord Dufferin frequently came forward and mixed with the men; he would sit down on the gun tackle and chat away, yarning with them.

I noticed a great change for the better in the appearance of Lady Dufferin since the time I saw her going up the poop ladder after that terrible shaking she had experience on the voyage from San Francisco. She looked so bright and happy as she came on board, greeting the officers around the gangway with a smile.

The evening was spent quietly, as it was not intended to sail until the next day. The hour of our intended departure was known to the people in Esquimalt and Victoria; the American mailboat *Dakota* happened to be lying in Victoria Harbour at the time and was due to sail about the same time as the *Amethyst*. You may depend there was a lot of heated discussion in the hotels of Victoria as to which ship would be the first to arrive at San Francisco. Some heavy bets were made on the event. A little of the controversy was wafted on board the *Amethyst*, causing considerable excitement among all hands, especially the engine-room staff and stokers, when they heard that the captain of the *Dakota* had boasted in one of the hotels that he would give the Britisher a race for it. He guessed if he did not beat the *Amethyst* he would burn the old *Dakota!* But neither the beating nor the burning ever came off!

We weighed anchor and started on our journey at noon, September 21st, 1876. Crowds of cheering people were assembled at the dockyard and at other points of vantage. Both Lord and Lady Dufferin had made themselves very popular with the people during their visit.

As we entered the Straits of Juan-de-Fuca, we sighted a vessel which proved to be the *Dakota;* she was a paddle steamer—the usual type in those days. She was about three miles ahead of us, and so she remained until she was out of the Straits. Several deck hands volunteered to work in the stokehold to assist in firing up, while all hands were on deck watching the ship ahead, for it could be seen there was going to be a great race. On reaching Cape Flattery we could just make out the *Dakota* creeping down south close under the land. Fortunately for us, a fresh breeze sprang up right off the port quarter, so all sail was set and we were soon booming along; but as the wind freshened a bit the

royals were taken in. We continued pelting along under steam and sail, making a fine run down to San Francisco; where we arrived and anchored just before 8 a.m. on Sunday morning, September 24th taking sixty-eight hours to cover the distance of eight hundred miles. Not too bad in those days. Naturally all eyes were looking around for the *Dakota*, but there was no sign of her.

Lord Dufferin and his staff left the ship about 11 a.m., Lady Dufferin giving a photograph to each of the galley's crew as a souvenir to be kept in remembrance of the happy time she had spent in H.M.S. *Amethyst*. I wonder how many of us are alive to-day who can recollect the events I have made an effort to put clearly before you; events which happened fifty-two years ago.

About 3 p.m., the same afternoon, the signalman reported the *Dakota* coming up the river. We had beaten her—thanks to the fine breeze—by seven hours. The only burning we could see was the smoke coming out of her funnels! No doubt her skipper felt disappointed when he saw the Britisher laying at anchor, thinking of the chaff he would get when his ship returned to Victoria.

The following day a lighter came alongside with our bower anchor, which we had left behind when we first embarked Lord Dufferin and his staff. The anchor was hoisted in its place and secured.

The *Amethyst* sailed from San Francisco for the last time on September 27th. We were lucky this time, experiencing fine weather the whole way, quite a contrast to our other trips to Esquimalt. Steaming at half speed we arrived on Monday, October 2nd, and dropped anchor in our old billet, where we settled down to take things easy.

I feel I must relate the following incident which used to give great pleasure to a small section of the crew of

the *Amethyst*, and which shows the happy spirit existing between the officers and men of the ship. Often in later years, my thoughts have wandered back to the homely couple who took the principal part in it. I have already mentioned that there were no private dwellings, but only a few hotels or public-houses scattered along the road between Esquimalt and Victoria. The favourite house for the men of H.M.S. *Amethyst* when on shore was the New Inn, kept by John Doran; a name well known and respected by all bluejackets who had been to Esquimalt. I was told that Johnnie—as he was called—had been a journalist connected with some newspaper in Ireland, but owing to the trouble there in 1866 he had to clear out. He and his buxom wife always did their best to make those visiting their house happy and comfortable, but he would stand no nonsense; if you wanted to be rowdy, you were soon packed off outside!

The Roman Catholics on board the *Amethyst* landed for Divine Service every Sunday, and had to march to a small corrugated iron church, rather more than a mile from the town. It was situated in a clearance made in the wood by the roadside, three hundred yards on the other side of Johnnie Doran's house. I shall always remember Mrs. Doran and the little snacks she used to prepare for us by the time service was over.

One of our sub-lieutenants was a Roman Catholic. He always landed in charge of our party while the ship lay at Esquimalt, and he very kindly allowed us a "stand easy" before returning to the ship.

After the service was over we were marched to Doran's and dismissed, and then were allowed to purchase one pint of beer, no more! The officer knew that Mrs. Doran always laid bread and cheese for us, so the pint of beer would not do us any harm; she also used to put dishes of scallions—or what are known in Devonshire as chibbles—on the counter. We much

enjoyed that little snack with our pint of beer, it made such a change for us.

The officer usually went into a small room at the back to enjoy his refreshment and never worried us until the ten minutes were up. We appreciated his kindness and trust in us, and never spoke about it to the other men on board.

One afternoon an accident happened to our chaplain which might have led to disaster. He sent for me to bring the skiff to the gangway and to step her mast, as he intended to do a little fishing under sail. I reported to him when the boat was ready, so along he came in his frock coat and billy-cock hat, loaded up with his fishing tackle. I secured the end of a small rod to the afterthwart, one on each side of the boat, laid his large tobacco pouch on the seat quite handy to him; the lines being attached to the rods.

He said, "I shall not require you, Riley, as I can manage the boat by myself in this gentle breeze; look out for me when I return." I advised him to be careful and not keep his sheet fast when near the dockyard, for he might get some nasty puffs of wind coming from between the rocks and the shore.

I watched him sail away with a line trailing along on each side of the boat, perfectly happy, with a pipe in his mouth blowing a cloud.

I don't know what made me do so, but I went on the poop and asked the signalman of the watch to keep his eye on the chaplain and to let me know when he was returning. It was fortunate I did, for about six bells, or 3 p.m., the signalman shouted out to the bo'sun's mate to call away the cutter, shouting "hurry up the cutter's crew;" he then ran down and reported to the officer of the day that the skiff with the chaplain in it had capsized. When I got on deck I saw the skiff about three hundred yards ahead of the ship, over on its side with the sail lying flat on the water. When the

cutter reached her, the chaplain was hanging on to the stern of the boat with his right hand, and treading water to keep himself afloat, the tails of his coat being spread out behind him, and his billy-cock hat on the back of his head, while he was holding his pipe in his mouth with his left hand. When he was dragged out of the boat his first words were, "I don't think it is out!" at the same time puffing away at his pipe; a remark which caused many a laugh.

The cutter's crew tried to right the skiff, but she dipped when they lifted the mast. They at once returned to the ship with the parson, who after a change of clothes, was nothing the worse for his adventure.

CHAPTER XVII

OUR DEPARTURE FROM ESQUIMALT, VANCOUVER ISLAND

On November 1st, 1876, a notice was posted up on the lower deck that the *Amethyst* would leave Esquimalt on a certain date, for a long trip to Valparaiso, Chile. The notice was given to enable the stewards and caterers of messes to lay in a stock of provisions to supplement the service ration, these extra provisions being purchased by the mess savings, or if these were not sufficient, by money provided by the men themselves. Each mess was allowed to bring on board two sacks of potatoes and a large bag of flour, containing one and a half hundredweight: this latter was for the cook to make dough-boys or "sinkers." They were made without suet or fat! The stewards also laid in a stock of live poultry to last the voyage, completely filling the hen coops. Sheep pens were fixed up forward, into which were stowed fourteen fine sheep, to provide fresh meat for the officers.

Everyone on board was sorry to leave, as we had enjoyed very good times there, for it made such a difference when on shore, being able to associate with English-speaking people. Officers and men had made many friends in Esquimalt, and in the city of Victoria, during our stay at Vancouver Island. We left on November 7th, and, weighing anchor, steamed down the Straits. After passing Cape Flattery, we made sail and commenced our long trail to the south.

While the potatoes and flour lasted we lived like fighting cocks, but after they were gone it was bare Navy, i.e. pound and pint for the remainder of the trip. It was wonderful how we thrived on it and kept fit. For the benefit of the present generation of Naval men I will set out in detail our menu, as issued by the ship's steward from day to day.

First day: Salt pork and pea soup; second day: fresh beef, preserved in tins, and preserved potatoes. These were made into a mash by pouring boiling water over them keeping all well stirred. I often wondered why use was never made of these potatoes during the Great War, when nearly every family in the country was short of them. They were easily prepared for a meal and were nutritious. The third day we had salt pork and pea soup; fourth day, salt beef, like leather, with flour, figs and salt suet, to make a "figgy" pudding. Fifth day: salt pork and soup again. Sixth day: fresh mutton in tins and rice. Seventh day: again pork and soup. Breakfast consisted of one pint of cocoa and biscuit. At 4 p.m. we had a pint of tea without milk. Thus we had, as you can see, a splendid variety. Salt pork every other day, and some of it not too good. By a recent Admiralty Order, salt pork has been removed from the scale of Service Rations on all stations; this order could not have been made in the old days when ships had to make long voyages.

When we had been at sea just over a week the men on the lower deck were grousing about the rotten pork issued. It was indeed in a bad state; the fat had a rusty, yellow colour, and when cooked it shrivelled up. It became so bad that the cooks of the messes decided to see the first lieutenant; so they lined up on the quarter-deck. When No. 1 saw the kind of stuff that was issued, he reported to the captain, who, after examining it, sent for the paymaster and the ship's steward, and gave instructions for the paymaster to

have a pair of scales fixed up on casks on the days that pork was issued, and to weigh the pork after it was cooked. Should it not weigh the recognised standard weight allowed after cooking, the messes were to be given, if only a few ounces short, a four pound piece from the harness-cask, which was washed, cut into slices and soaked over night, then put into a large tin dish, with layers of pork and biscuits, and baked in the oven for breakfast. It was a wise order of the captain's because it made the men contented by removing a grievance, and giving them a fine meal to start the day with.

The ship was slowly making her way down south under sail, and having passed the equator, we were beginning to feel the effects of our long and tedious voyage. What we should have done with ourselves without the hour's drill nearly every evening, I am sure I don't know; it kept us fit and in good health.

Just imagine what it was like: A ship's company of two hundred and twenty souls, cooped up for a period of sixty-one days in the small space provided by the interior of a ship, two hundred and twenty feet long by thirty-seven feet beam, without seeing land or passing a single vessel, nothing to see outside the ship, day after day, but the horizon and the intervening sea.

For a part of the voyage we were accompanied by a pair of large albatross, wonderful birds, which will follow a ship for days without apparently moving their wings, though able to keep up with the ship. I have often sat watching them hovering near, and occasionally making a dive for something in the water.

It must have been a trying ordeal for the merchant seamen in the old days, sailing long voyages with a crew of mixed nationalities cooped up in an old wind-jammer.

One afternoon an accident happened to old Taff Kingslake, the man who had such a narrow escape from

being washed off the jib-boom when poor Billy Stapleton was drowned.

We were sailing along with the wind on our port beam, driving the ship about four knots through the water, when old Taff supplied us with a long-felt want —a diversion—which woke things up a bit.

It was about six bells, i.e. 3 p.m., and everything was very quiet on the deck, the watch just pottering about with their different jobs; Lieutenant Lambert, the officer of the watch, glancing aloft, would stroll across the poop, have a look over the side, and then back again to the weather dickey.

Everyone on deck was waiting for eight bells, when suddenly, out of the stillness, came a voice from somewhere outside the ship, shouting "Ship ahoy! *Amethyst* ahoy!" which soon put life into the hands on deck. The officer of the watch rushed across the poop, the men jumping up on the gunwales, or looking out of the gunports; there they saw old Taff Kingslake in a line with the after gangway, waving his arms and shouting as hard as he could "Ship ahoy." The man stationed at the life-buoy dropped it fairly close to Taff, who swam to it and supported himself, the officer of the watch giving orders to the quartermaster to put the helm hard down, which brought the ship up to the wind: he then hove her to. The lifeboat was lowered, the midshipman of the watch taking charge of her. Kingslake was soon picked up with the lifebuoy, and on returning to the ship the boat was hoisted, the yards trimmed and away we went.

When old Taff appeared on board he looked very comical, with his duck suit clinging to his body, and hair hanging down over his forehead; his whiskers and large bushy eyebrows stretched out with his eyes peering through them. He looked like a rat peeping through a bunch of oakum! He reported to the officer of the watch that he had fallen out of the fore-

rigging, where he was repairing ratlines. He was heaving the turns of the seizing taut with his mallet, but, putting too much leverage on the mallet, he carried away the seizing, with the result that he dipped over the side!

All this commotion on deck soon brought all hands up wondering what had caused the stir. The incident gave us something to talk about for the remainder of the trip; we had another excitement shortly afterwards, but with a more unfortunate ending.

About ten days after old Taff's accident, a most regrettable occurrence happened to the leading hand of the main crosstrees—a position always given to a smart man. He was as nice a young fellow as ever trod a ratline. The sailmaker had been repairing the spare jib during the forenoon between the guns, and the leading hand, after he had had his dinner and a smoke, lay down on the sail for a nap. When the bo'sun's mate piped "Sweepers and clear up decks," the bo'sun and a petty officer went over to the sail to rouse him up, ordering him to get off the sail at once. They took hold of the sail and jerked him on to the deck, with the result that he jumped to his feet, struck the petty officer in the face, and attempted to strike the warrant officer, i.e., the boatswain, but was prevented from doing so.

The man was brought before the officer of the watch, who ordered him to be put below. The next day he was brought before the first lieutenant, who, hearing the evidence, had him brought before the captain; the man calling no one on his behalf. On the evidence, the captain had no option but to sentence him to be tried by Court Martial, as the case was too serious for him to deal with it.

This is the sequel to his foolish act: He had to remain below, and when in harbour was placed in irons. This continued for several months, as we were waiting

to meet a sufficient number of ships to form a Court for his trial, as not less than five officers of the rank of lieutenant and above constitutes a court for the trial of court-martial prisoners.

Eventually, when the man was tried, the ship's company received a shock on hearing that he had been found guilty, and sentenced to five years' penal servitude. He had to suffer this cruel, harsh punishment for a crime committed on the spur of the moment, and without premeditation. We all knew he had committed a most serious crime against Naval discipline, especially in those days. What a calamity for a smart young man, only twenty-three years of age, to be cut down, as it were, in the prime of his young manhood, and compelled, on his arrival in England, to associate with criminals for five long years for a crime which, considering the circumstances under which it was committed, would in these days be sufficiently punished by a sentence of twelve months' imprisonment. Thank goodness such harsh and cruel judgments are gone for ever.

We continued our journey south under sail, only getting up steam when there was no wind; the propeller, which was always hoisted out of the water when we were under sail, would then be lowered into its place and keyed to the mainshaft. When steam was raised, the sails would be furled, and we would continue to journey under steam until another breeze came along to carry us merrily on our way.

Whenever we made anything like a long trip, a chart would be fixed on the notice board, Mr. Savory, the Navigating Midshipman, marking off the course and distance travelled each day, at noon, the men taking a keen interest in the tracing. It could be seen that our course lay well over to the east, not far from Easter Island, and nothing would have pleased me better than to hear that the ship intended paying a visit to Pitcairn

Island, for I should have liked to have seen the islanders of whom I had read so much.

Christmas, 1876, was drawing near, and it could be seen by the marking on the chart that we were doomed to spend the day at sea. Fortunately the caterers of messes had been wise enough to lay in a stock of provisions for the day; things that would keep, such as hams, tinned foods, and ingredients for the Christmas puddings. We were under sail again with a stiff breeze blowing, and with every prospect of having dirty weather during Christmas.

When the ship replenished stores at Esquimalt from the dockyard, the biscuits and pork supplied turned out to be awful; they must have been in store for ages. I have described the pork; and the biscuits, when they were issued to the messes, were as hard as rocks! We could not make any impression on them with our teeth, but had to break them into small pieces with rolling pins or hammers, and then soak the pieces in our tea or cocoa before we could tackle them.

Realising the fact that Christmas would be spent at sea, we soon settled down, with true sailor-like equanimity, to make the usual preparations for decorating our messes with flags. One part of our decorations was of an unusual order, for a few days before Christmas a genius hit on a plan to supplement the decorations by stringing the hard biscuits together so as to form different devices, which could then be stretched along the mess-deck, such as "Travellers' Rest," etc. The idea was taken up by every mess on the lower deck, the full allowance of biscuits being taken from the ship's steward at each issue, so that they had plenty to work on to make whatever device took their fancy. Such mottoes as "Home, Sweet Home" or "Welcome to All" were hung up outside each mess; also several very clever devices were made by piercing the indent on the outer edge of the biscuit, and then tying them together with

a piece of twine until a string of sufficient length was made to form the words; strands of wire secured to the back of the biscuits helped the formation of the letters.

As it came on to blow very hard on Christmas Eve, the upper yards were sent down and a reef taken in the topsails. We rode out the night with not too bright a prospect of a fine Christmas Day. It was still blowing hard in the morning, and the captain gave orders to take another reef in the topsails so as to make the ship as snug and comfortable as possible under the circumstances, and also to avoid disturbing the men during the day.

The ship's company of the *Amethyst* spent Christmas Day, 1876, at sea, with two reefs in the topsails, and a fine old breeze blowing, causing the ship to roll, and making it difficult to keep anything on the tables, which, being fixed fore and aft, were by so much the easier for the dishes to slide off. To overcome this difficulty, the sponge and rammers of the guns, were secured along the outer edge of the table with spun-yarn. We also used spun-yarn to form a kind of fiddle for the dishes, passing it across from staff to staff.

After divisions and prayers, instead of service we piped down, the hands going below to decorate their messes with flags and biscuits. The words of some of the mottoes were very funny, each mess having a different one.

At 11 a.m. the master-at-arms came for'ard and informed us that there would not be any "rounds" by the captain and officers that day. It was the first Christmas Day he had missed going the rounds with his officers for four years, and it was a function that was always looked forward to with pleasure by the men. It was one of those sociable functions that brought the captain, officers and men more closely together and which tended to make the men more contented with their lot, away from their home folks.

Departure from Vancouver

The captain of the ship is always looked upon as "the old man," and the men were very disappointed when they heard the news. They wondered whether it was the weather or the decorating of the lower deck with biscuits that had caused him to depart from his usual practice. We all felt it keenly at the time, after having been with him for so many years.

The men kept the usual Christmas Day routine. The bo'sun's mates gathered around the hatchway leading to the lower deck, and when eight bells was struck by the hand of a Royal Marine, they piped dinner. We soon turned to, quickly forgetting our troubles, and enjoyed the good things on the table which our caterer had had the foresight to provide for us; and when dinner was over it was all hands in to clear things away and wash up.

The grog having been served out, it was passed around for everyone to have a drink out of the basin; the afternoon was then given over to fun, singing and dancing to our hearts' content; and so passed away our third Christmas away from England.

Christmas over, the men did not care how long the ship remained at sea, as we were getting used to it, and the longer the ship remained at sea and away from Valparaiso, the more money we could save. When the ship had gone far enough south to catch the south-west trade winds, the course was shaped for Valparaiso, and we soon had a nice breeze which brought the ship into port on January 7th, 1877.

CHAPTER XVIII

A VISIT TO ROBINSON CRUSOE'S ISLAND

REMAINING only two days at Valparaiso, we sailed for Coquimbo; the first lieutenant embracing the opportunity of giving the ship a thorough overhaul after our long trip. Rigging was set up, then blackened down, the mast and yards painted, making the *Amethyst* look what she was: a smart ship.

I think our officers rather liked Coquimbo and the district around; they used to make frequent trips ashore, especially in the afternoon.

About the middle of the month, when the ship was looking like a yacht, the captain and officers decided to give an afternoon dance on board. Great preparations were made to decorate the poop and quarter-deck, the awnings being spread, and large flags used as curtains, and also spread to cover the underneath part; thus making everything look bright and cheerful.

Although an A.B. at the time, I was selected to act as "side boy," there being no boys in the ship; but I can assure you I was very pleased to have the job.

Invitations were sent to the small colony of English people living in the district at the time, most of them being connected with the copper mines and smelting works there.

I particularly remember one family, whose name was Lambert. It was said that Mr. Lambert owned most of the mines in the district and was a very rich man.

Visit to Crusoe's Island

I know he had a most beautiful daughter, a fine strapping girl! After the dance she was known to the men as the "Belle of the Ball." It was amusing to see the bluejackets hiding behind the guns like so many "Peeping Toms of Coventry," watching the ladies as they stepped on board, and weighing up each one as she stood at the top of the ladder before walking down on deck; it being a strange sight to bluejackets in those far-off days.

The visitors commenced to arrive on board about 2.30 p.m. It was my job to stand on the iron stays at the bottom of the ladder and to hand each person the manrope—secured to the post—by which to help themselves out of the boat. I stood there on the stays, watching the procedure the ladies adopted in getting out. Standing on the seat of the boat—which was below the platform of the ladder—I held out the manrope, which each lady would grasp with her left hand, using the other to raise the front of her dress so as to enable her to put her foot on the step; then, with an upward glance and a smile, and with the assistance of one of the officers, she would pull herself up on the platform, and walk up the ladder in a most sedate manner, the officer following behind. What a contrast to the rush of the present day, and the short dresses now worn! Ladies can now run up a ladder more quickly and smartly than some of the young men!

The visitors left the ship at 6 p.m., and from what I heard of their conversation as they settled themselves in the boats, they had enjoyed their afternoon "hop." As well as I can remember, this was the only dance held on board during the four years we were away from England.

Towards the end of the month we carried out our heavy gun practice while cruising in the bay off Coquimbo; and while we were at sea a rumour went around the lower deck that the captain intended visiting

the island of Juan Fernandez. I was delighted at the prospect, for I had read Defoe's fantastic story of Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday, having borrowed the book from the ship's library.

It gave me great pleasure to think we were to visit that island, lying out in the Pacific, around which so fine a romance had been written. I promised myself I should see as much of it as possible while we lay there.

In my young days, and to everyone who had read the story, Juan Fernandez was the magnet round which our thoughts centred. The story of Robinson Crusoe has been the delight of millions of people of all ages. What a splendid inspiration it was that came to the person who first thought of turning that fanciful story into a Pantomime, thereby giving pleasure and many hours enjoyment to people the whole world over.

We sailed from Coquimbo on January 31st, arriving in Cumberland Bay 5.30 a.m., February 5th. Cumberland Bay was situated on the north side of the island, and was formed by two points of high hills curving around in a half circle. The range of hills had several high peaks and projecting rocks, the whole being covered with green shrubs or vegetation, and making a fine aspect with the whitish rocks jutting out of the green.

A wide valley ran straight up the centre of the hills having several ravines or gullies leading into it; also, a stream of water could be plainly seen from the ship, running down the valley into the sea. The first range of hills on the right stood back from the beach, leaving an open space several hundred yards long and covered with grass

After dinner, a free gangway was granted, i.e., those who wished to go ashore could do so by making up a party to man the boats. Naturally I went on shore with the first party, the whole of us, as soon as we landed, scattering about in little groups. Another fellow and

Visit to Crusoe's Island

I soon found that there were people living on the island, their wooden houses being situated just behind the first range of hills on the right of the valley, where there was a large, open space, practically the whole of it cultivated. We were joined by some of the other men, and, walking over to the houses, we asked the people who came towards us if they would oblige us with some milk, which they kindly gave us. We managed to find out from them that they were Swiss people who were trying to colonise the island. The party consisted of thirteen people; they had farm stock of all kinds, but what took our fancy most were six sturdy ponies grazing on a patch of grass, the boys having fine fun with them later in the afternoon. They also told us that a schooner from Valparaiso visited the island once a month, bringing whatever they required and exchanging it for skins or bundles of dried fish—very plentiful there—or for any farm produce they had to barter.

Walking around, we came across some huge stalks with enormous leaves, spread out like rhubarb leaves, and with the outer edges turned slightly upwards. Probably it was from those leaves that the idea of Man Friday's umbrella, as seen at the Pantomime, originated.

Two of us walked towards the westernmost point of the bay, where at the end of the level ground we saw a lonely grave, close at the base of the high hill. The headstone was marked in clear letters with the name of a petty officer of H.M.S. *Repulse* who had fallen from aloft. What better spot could have been selected for a sailor's grave; to be laid at rest so close to the sea, and with the waves breaking on the shore? We stood by that lonely grave, away from the crowd, with everything around us so solemn and still, and acting on impulse we both dropped on our knees and offered up a prayer for the repose of his soul. We walked

slowly back towards the others, who had meanwhile persuaded the people to bring the ponies down on the level space. They would not lend their saddles so our fellows had to ride bare-back! Two of the colonists were there to take the money—sixpence for a ride of fifteen minutes—and to look after the ponies. All sailors can ride; they learn the motion while sitting across the booms or yards of their ships.

You should have seen them riding helter-skelter, forward and back on the level space, holding the reins wide apart, and with legs straight to the front, and wind blowing up the bell-bottoms of their trousers and up the sleeves of their jumpers, their caps (secured by a chin-stay), on the backs of their heads. There were several falls, but the riders were soon up and away again; and it was a sight to do one's heart good, for they were so thoroughly enjoying themselves; but oh! the next morning, when they felt the effects of riding bare-back!

Several of the older hands had brought their dirty clothes on shore, and seized the opportunity of washing them in the stream running down from the hills. A few of us made inquiries as to the whereabouts of the caves which were formerly used by the Chilean Government as a Convict Prison, and we were directed to some high hills on the other side of the valley. We made tracks in the direction indicated, and soon came across some openings cut in the side of the hill. We walked into one of the entrances for a distance of about fifty feet, and found that the cave then branched off to the left, forming a kind of alley-way, having long, narrow compartments on the left hand side about eight feet by thirty feet, where the convicts may have been herded together. The ceilings were fairly high, and it was quite light, but the whole place reeked with a damp, murky air, with water oozing through the ceilings and down the walls. It must have

been an awful place in which to pack human beings, and I was glad to get out into the open air.

By the time we got to the boats it was time to return on board, I, for one, being quite satisfied with my first day on shore. The next day, when we landed, about twenty of the younger ones, after being directed by one of the colonists, started out to find Selkirk's "Look-out," and we made our way up a steep, winding path on the left of the valley, which we were told would lead to it. On either side were dense thickets of flowering shrubs, and several ravines leading down between the overhanging rocks. We were a long time getting to the top, which was about three thousand feet high, but when we eventually reached the summit a magnificent view presented itself of both sides of the island.

We could see our ship anchored in the bay, groups of men washing their clothes and spreading them out on the grass to dry, while others were walking round and exploring the place, but from where we sat everything looked very small. No doubt Alexander Selkirk had frequently sat on the same spot during the four years and four months he lived alone on the island, anxiously watching for a sail to heave in sight. . . . From where we sat, we could see numerous rocks studded about in the water on the south side of the island, and seals could easily be made out disporting themselves on the rocks. There was no doubt about the genuineness of the seal skins which the colonists bartered with the captain of the schooner for the stores he brought from Valparaiso.

The ship's steward's assistant, whose name was Tattersall, formed one of our party; he was one of those quiet young fellows who have very little to say. He had provided himself with some "figgy duff" and a bottle of tea, so that a few of us had a nice little snack; and while we were yarning together, Tattersall said repeatedly that he should like to see the cave where

Selkirk lived his lonely life. We told him there was no cave up there, as it was impossible for Selkirk to come up the south side, as the rocks and cliffs appeared to be more precipitous than on the side we had climbed.

After our repast we commenced to explore the gap, and soon found a tablet firmly fixed to a rock on which was engraved the following:

"This Tablet is Erected Near Selkirk's
'Look-Out'
By Commodore Powell and Officers
Of H.M.S. *Topaz*. A.D. 1868."

We saw that all the rocks around had the names of men, their ships, and dates scratched on them with knives or stones. I and a few others sat down—after selecting a nice flat piece of rock suitable for our purpose—and taking out my "purser's dagger" or service knife, I marked in deep-cut letters the name of Patrick Riley, H.M.S. *Amethyst*, 1877. I wonder if it is there now, after fifty-one years!

We spent some time looking at the different names and ships, and, while doing so, Tattersall took me by the arm and said, "Pat, now I have seen the 'Look-Out,' I should like very much to see his cave." I told him not to be a fool, but to stick to the others and wait until to-morrow, and then have a look around on the lower part of the island.

We came to several small plateaux, or level spots of grass, where we commenced skylarking, until one of the men shouted out that it was time to return. I thought no more of Tattersall, supposing that he had joined the others in the fun of chasing about, and we all started running down the steep path, shouting, "Come on, come on," following each other in a string, sometimes having to go very slowly, the path being steep; still, chasing each other was, to us, great fun.

Visit to Crusoe's Island

Arriving at the bottom, we all rushed for the boats, which the men who had been washing their clothes had got ready; we tumbled in and pushed off, and were soon on board, quite tired.

It was presently discovered that young Tattersall was missing. I quite thought he was in one of the other boats, but everything had been such a rush. I reported what he had said to me, and how anxious he appeared to see the cave, whereupon a search-party, composed of an officer and eight men, was at once despatched on shore, taking ropes and lanterns with them. The people on the island were informed of what had happened, and a few of them—acting as guides—at once set off with our men, rendering them every assistance. The search party was out all night, calling out his name but receiving no reply. The search party worked their way up to the "look-out," and had started exploring around on the level spots where we had been skylarking, when it suddenly became very dark. The officer decided to camp where they were for the night, as it would be dangerous to move about, the lanterns not being of much use. A kind Providence must have been watching over them, for when dawn broke, not ten feet away was a precipice! If they had gone on it would have led to disaster, for the whole party most likely would have been dashed to pieces.

After a fruitless search the party returned on board, but before doing so the officer made arrangements for another party of islanders to continue the search with dogs, but this time on the south side of the island.

They searched the whole day, pursuing their quest in every spot they could think of as a likely place where poor Tattersall might have fallen; but they met with no success; no signs of him could be found.

The following day, when the men were going on shore, they were cautioned about straying far from each other, and told to remain in small groups and look

carefully into any thickets they might come across; a couple of the captain's galley's crew going ashore with the party. In the afternoon the captain ordered his boat to be called away. I, being the spare hand, was detailed to form one of the crew, so we brought the galley alongside the gangway.

The only Martini-Henry rifle we had in the ship, with a belt of cartridges, was passed into the boat; the captain intending to do a little shooting at the wild goats which grazed about on the rocks above.

Pushing off, we pulled the boat slowly towards the westward end of the island, which is long and narrow, as could be seen from the "look-out." We saw several wild goats up on the rocks, but they were rather too high to shoot at, so we pulled quietly along, making as little noise as possible.

At last we came to a small bay where the rocks were only about eight hundred feet high, and had several ledges of rocks lower down, on which goats were quietly grazing. We ceased pulling and remained perfectly still while the captain loaded his rifle, took aim and fired at some goats on a ledge about a hundred yards up the cliff. The captain knocked over one, which fell on the sandy beach below; the others scattered. Two of the hands quickly jumped out of the boat and picked up the goat which was dead, and laid it in the boat.

We then pulled the galley around a point of land to another bay where the hills ran back, with a large, grassy slope in front. We hauled the galley several feet up the beach. The captain took his rifle and belt of ammunition, and telling his coxwain that he would not be back for about two hours, went away on his own.

As soon as the skipper was gone we jumped out of the boat and started searching around on the grassy slope; I, mooning around on my own, as usual, went around the point of land to the next bay, where the

captain had shot the goat. I walked along the beach until I came to a place where I could get up on a grassy slope similar to the other, but smaller. I continued my walk, taking bearings as I went, for, somehow or other I had a feeling that I might come across Selkirk's Cave, as I was not far from the valley.

I was walking along, and keeping a sharp look-out, when I came to some rocks forming a point running out from the hillside, and on getting around to the other side I saw what I supposed was the cave.

It was cut out from the side of the hill, with the opening facing the sea. To the best of my recollection it was cut square with the roof, being about eight feet high, and twelve feet square. The sides and floor were of dark earth, and its depth might have been more than twelve feet, but seeing that the walls were bare and the place smelt rather foul, I did not enter.

Having seen what I supposed was the cave which poor Tattersall had so much wanted to explore, I made my way back, getting down on the beach and intending to go around the same point I had passed when setting out. But on arriving there I found the tide flowing round it. I tried to climb the rocks, but failed, so decided to hurry back and get behind the hill to where the boat lay.

I had not gone far when I met the captain carrying his rifle. I saluted him, and explained that the tide had flowed round the point, preventing anyone from getting round; and the only way back was over the rocks on the point, or else to walk round behind. He looked at the height of the rocks and said, "We can manage to get over." Placing his rifle on the ground, I locked my hands together so as to form a step on which the captain placed his foot, then, placing his hand on my shoulder to steady himself, he smartly pulled himself up on top. I then handed up the rifle and belt of cartridges.

The captain, lying flat, reached well down, and I caught hold of his hand, and with his help, climbed up, thereby saving a long journey round the rocks.

I picked up the rifle and belt, and we made our way to the boat, returning on board after another day of adventure.

Our visit to Juan Fernandez, or Robinson Crusoe's Island, came to an end after staying there four days and a half, and having a most enjoyable time, the only drawback being the loss of young Tattersall, whose body could not be found.

We left Valparaiso on the afternoon of February 9th, 1877, carrying away a store of knowledge with which to spin many a yarn in after years.

CHAPTER XIX

EARTHQUAKES

You have doubtless read of the terrible earthquakes which devastate the Pacific Coasts and which at times result in such disaster to the people, enveloping the whole or parts of towns, and causing tidal waves which play great havoc with shipping.

In the early part of May, 1877, while the *Amethyst* was lying at Coquimbo, Chile, we felt a very severe shock about 10 p.m., which caused the ship to tremble and veer about. We could feel her jerking at her anchors. The next morning, while the hands were scrubbing decks, we again felt the ship shaking under our feet, causing the stays and rigging to vibrate. One of the men, looking over the side, shouted out, "Look, you fellows." We all downed brushes and ran over to him, some getting up on the gunwales, others poking their heads out of the gun-ports.

A strange sight met our eyes; there were large pieces of iron, pots and pans, and rubbish of every description that had been dropped overboard from ships, driven by some compelling force to the surface. They came up zig-zag fashion, and then sank again.

The jolly-boat had gone ashore with the stewards for fresh beef, under the charge of our junior midshipman, C. F. Thursby, who I am pleased to see by the Navy List is the present Admiral Sir Cecil F. Thursby, K.C.B., K.C.M.G. (Retired).

While the jolly-boat was lying alongside the landing-stage, the same volcanic force which shook the ship and which made things move from the bottom of the sea, caused a wave to rush inshore and swamp her, and she sank alongside the stage. One of the crew dived and brought up the boat's painter; he then secured the sheet and passed that up, so that Mr. Thursby and his crew were able to raise the boat and bale her out, then returning on board, though rather late.

Shortly afterwards news came on board that a terrible earthquake had occurred up the coast, causing great damage to towns and shippings. The shock was so severe at Coquimbo that the people rushed from their homes and fled to the hills, some, in their terror, going on to the rocks which ran out to a point, forming the harbour. Captain Chatfield placed the service of H.M.S. *Amethyst* at the disposal of the Chilean authorities, offering to take in extra stores, and proceed north to render what assistance he could to the survivors; so steam was raised in all boilers, and the first lieutenant gave orders to clear lower deck and unmoor ship. We were lying with both anchors down, the swivel on, but with only one bridle inboard. When the swivel was hove close up by the capstan it was seen we had a fine job on! The cables below the swivel were twisted around each other. Several times during the night the ship must have swung round and round too fast for the swivel to keep the turns out of the cables below. After clearing the cables we were soon on the job of getting one of the anchors up and shortening in the other cable, ready to be off.

While we were unmooring ship, a cutter's crew went alongside the *Nereus* and were supplied with blankets, biscuits and other stores.

The people of Coquimbo and the district around sent on board bundles of preserved meat in long strips, quite dry and known as biltong. When all the stores

were on board it did not take long to weigh our other anchor and get away on our errand of mercy. On our way north the captain called at the port of Caldera for what information he could get, the officer of the day, a lieutenant, going on shore in the cutter to make inquiries. Lying close in-shore was a turret-ship, flying the Peruvian flag; this ship we found out afterwards was the Peruvian ironclad *Huascar*. We were anchored fairly close to her, about two cables, i.e. four hundred yards away.

As we had never seen a ship of her class before, all hands were greatly interested in her, admiring her heavy armament in comparison with our own, and asking each other questions. We could see quite plainly her two heavy turret guns, with their muzzles showing out of the portholes of her turret. She was also armed with two guns mounted on the afterpart of the upper-deck. She seemed to be cleared for action, as the gunwales on each side were turned out over her sides to give additional protection.

I noticed that the captain and first lieutenant were walking up and down in deep conversation, pausing in their walk occasionally to have a good look at her general outfit, and no doubt taking stock. Little did we think that before very long we should be having a brush with her.

When the cutter returned we weighed anchor and proceeded north to a place called, I believe, Peblo-de-Pico. The news brought off from Caldera confirmed that which we had received at Coquimbo, that Peblo-de-Pico had suffered the worst.

When we arrived there the next day, we saw that the town was a complete wreck, and had hardly a house standing, the people being huddled together in groups amongst the ruins, or on the rocks. Both cutters were lowered, their stern-sheets being filled up with stores for the people. The cutters went ashore with the

stores, landing at some steps cut in the rocks. What was left of the inhabitants, men, women and children, came crowding down to the boats. They presented a pitiful sight; some had on hardly any clothes, and it was fortunate for them that the place was situated so near the tropics, which made it fairly warm. The officers in charge handed over the blankets and stores to one of the leading men for distribution, and then returned on board.

While the officers were on shore with the cutters, one of the captains of the only two merchant ships which had escaped the full effect of the tidal wave—all the other ships lying there at the time having been sunk—came alongside with a boat's crew and reported to our captain. While their skipper was reporting, the men in the merchantman's boat got into conversation with some of our fellows. When they discovered that the *Amethyst* was a "West Country" ship they were delighted, tied up their boat and came inboard to have a yarn, very quickly chumming up. They told us that several of their crew were Devonshire men, their "old man," who was reporting, coming from Saltash.

They soon opened out, telling us all about their experience of the shock and the tidal wave which came immediately afterwards. They said that in the evening the skipper seemed to sense something, and, not liking the look of things overhead, told the mate to veer out a couple more shackles of cable. They were lying with both anchors down. Both the compressors had been thrown back, and when the shock came their old tub was carried out to the full extent of her cables; then back again with a rush, causing her to careen over nearly on her beam ends, carrying away several of her spars. She then righted herself. They could only account for their escape by the fact that they were lying well out in the roadstead, with plenty of cable out, and the

compressors thrown back, giving a free run to the cables, which ran out to a clinch.

They said it was an awful sight in the morning; only two ships remained afloat, the others were sunk with their masts and yards showing above water. Those sunk were anchored closer inshore than the other two. They also told our fellows that their mate, and a boat's crew, were going around the sunken ships, helping themselves to whatever spars they required to replace those they had lost. They said a pot of paint would soon make them look all alike!

When their skipper came forward they wished our fellows "good-bye," promising to call on some of the men's friends, as they were going straight home, whereas we had another twelve months or more before being relieved.

The *Amethyst* then proceeded to Antofagasta, a place further north. On arriving there, an officer landed to make inquiries as to the damage done. It was found that very few buildings had fallen, but that great damage was done to their water service. On that part of the coast their only water supply was by condensing the sea water, but the pipes and some parts of the condensers had been broken by the shock, and we were told that the people had to fetch water from somewhere inland until the condensers were repaired.

The captain ordered the sailing pinnace to be hoisted out, and a large canvas "tank," which could be stretched the whole length of the boat under the thwarts, to be put into the pinnace. Hoses were then led from our tanks into the canvas tank in the pinnace. When filled up it was taken ashore and the people supplied with sufficient water until their service was put right; the pinnace making two trips. Our own condensers were set going to refill our tanks. We hoisted in the pinnace, and the next day proceeded to Cobiga, a place still further north.

It was found that Cobiga had felt the shock severely. Several of the houses were wrecked, rendering many people homeless, but not to the same extent as at Peblo-de-Pico; but the water service had received greater damage than at Antofagasta. The captain ordered another tank to be put into the cutter, as well as the pinnace, both were then filled with water and taken on shore.

We remained at Cobiga for two days, supplying the people with blankets and stores, and making several trips ashore with water, enough for them to go on with until their condensers were repaired. During the whole of the time we were on our errand of mercy we were continually feeling shocks, at times shaking the ship fore and aft, and causing the stays and rigging to vibrate violently.

Having issued our stores and sufficient water for the people to carry on with, we returned to Coquimbo again, to wait further orders.

CHAPTER XX

ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN H.M.S. "SHAH" AND H.M.S. "AMETHYST" WITH THE PERUVIAN TURRET SHIP "HUASCAR," MAY 29TH, 1877

WHILE the *Amethyst* was lying at Coquimbo, rumours were circulating around the town, with regard to the Peruvian turret-ship, *Huascar*, which we had seen at the port of Caldera while on our way to the assistance of the sufferers from the earthquake. It was said that she had been stopping and searching British mail-boats up the coast, taking coal and stores from different ships and giving the captain a receipt for the stores, chargeable to the Peruvian Government. In fact, she was committing acts of piracy on the High Seas.

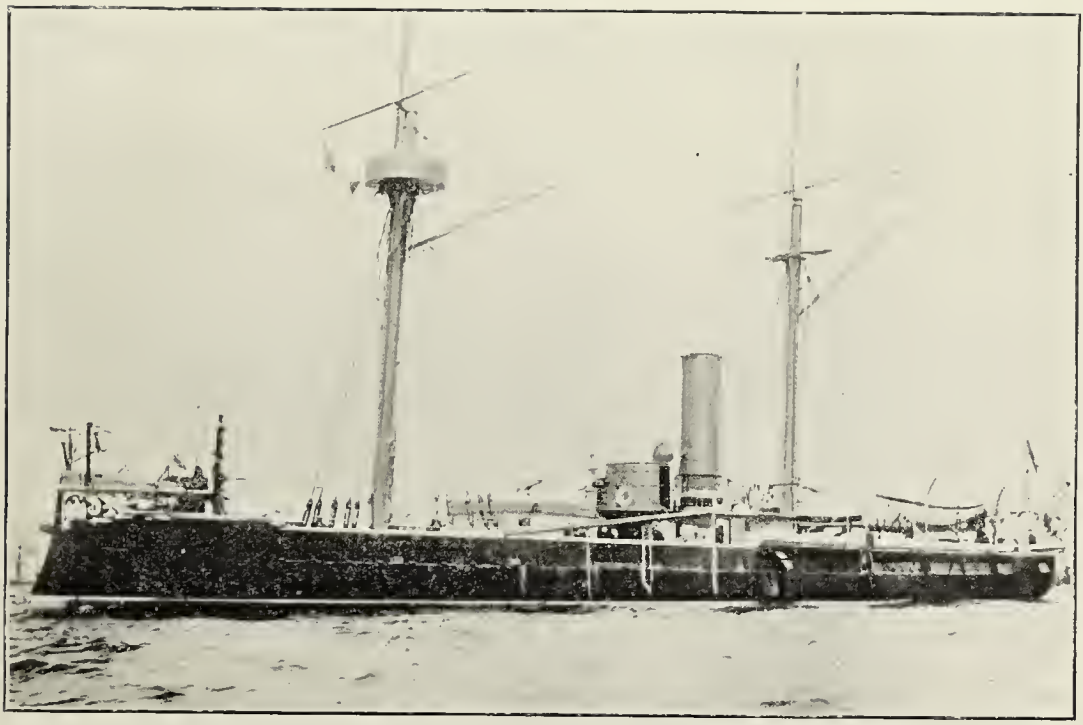
During one of those political squabbles, so frequent in Peru at that time between the various political factions, an ex-President, Nicolas de Pierola, persuaded two lieutenants of the Peruvian Navy to gather a crew for their country's finest fighting ship, the *Huascar*, which was lying in Callao Harbour at the time. She was then considered to be one of the most formidable ships afloat, being armed with two 10-inch guns, firing a projectile of three hundred pounds. These were mounted in a revolving turret, protected by five and a half inches of armour, and with a teak backing of eleven inches. The guns were muzzle-loading rifled, i.e. with grooves to fit the studs on the projectile to give it a spin as it left the gun and to keep it point on during its flight through the air. She was

also fitted with two 40-pounders, also muzzle loaders and rifled, which were mounted on the after-part of the upper deck. Her speed was only eleven knots, whereas our speed was thirteen and a half knots, while the *Shah* could steam sixteen and a half. When we saw her at Caldera she had all her spars down, excepting the gaffs from which she flew her flag.

One night, in the early part of the year, Pierola, with the two lieutenants and their picked crew, boarded the *Huascar*, raised steam, and left Callao for the south. We heard afterwards that it was their intention to try and persuade the Peruvian Fleet—which had remained loyal to the Government, and was anchored at Iquique—to join with them, but they were not successful.

On the 25th May, our captain received orders to join the Commander-in-Chief, Rear Admiral de Horsey, in his flagship, H.M.S. *Shah*, which was armed with two 9-inch guns, several 7-inch and 64-pounders. After we had picked up the *Shah* at the rendezvous, both ships headed north, the *Amethyst* keeping about ten miles from the shore, so that the officers, with their glasses, could easily spot any ship lying in the little bays along the coast as we steamed by; the *Shah* taking up a position ten miles outside, just off our port beam. About 2 p.m., May 29, the *Huascar* was sighted right ahead, and midway between us, steaming towards the town of Ilo. Both our ships now forged ahead, the *Shah*, with her superior speed, quickly closing on her; she then fired a blank charge as a signal for the *Huascar* to stop, which she did. We cleared for action, loading both our broadsides with "full charge" and "common shell" and remained closed up around our guns, waiting for the next move.

The Admiral then sent an officer in a cutter, to ask Pierola to surrender his ship, which he refused to do; the officer then returned to the *Shah* and reported the



Peruvian Turret Ship Huascar
Engaged with H.M.S. Shah and Amethyst off Ilo, Peru, 29th May, 1877

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result of the interview. About 3 p.m., after the cutter had been hoisted, the *Shah* opened fire on the *Huascar*, who immediately returned the fire, sending one projectile to the *Shah* and another to us. The engagement became general, all three ships manœuvring for position. The *Huascar* was clever enough to secure the in-shore position, in front of the town and shipping. The *Amethyst* opened with "independent firing;" the "number ones" of our guns letting rip as soon as their sights were on; with the result that our rapid shell fire very quickly cleared the upper part of the *Huascar*, compelling the crews of the 40-pounders to take cover below. The first lieutenant, who was also our "gunnery Jack," instructed our captains of guns to concentrate their fire on the superstructure which protected the engine room and stokehold. They soon had it knocked to smithereens!

I think it is only fair to the officers and men of the *Amethyst* to mention here, that in the Admiralty Return, "Heavy Gun Firing," for the whole Navy in the year 1876, which was sent out by the Admiralty and posted on our notice board on the lower deck, the *Amethyst* was at the top of the list, showing that we were the smartest ship in the whole Navy for that year.

As the extreme range of our guns was only three thousand eight hundred yards, the *Amethyst* had to engage the *Huascar* at a close range to have any effect on her; in fact, our gun sights at one period were lowered to a thousand yards, our guns letting rip at every chance, and riddling her funnel and masts which could be clearly seen from our gun-deck. Captain Chatfield made one or two attempts to get in between the *Huascar* and the shipping, but unfortunately he was recalled by signal from the *Shah*.

During the afternoon, a crowd of Peruvians mounted on horse-back were watching the fight from the top of some hills to the right of the town. On being recalled

out of action the *Amethyst* steamed into a position at right angles to the *Shah*, but in a direct line with the *Huascar*. The *Shah* then fired a broadside from her port guns, but the shells passed over the *Huascar* and struck the water midway between her and the shore, ricochetting up the hillside, and throwing up clouds of earth. It was very amusing to see the way those horsemen scattered in all directions to take cover!

Both ships continued firing away, and the *Huascar* had to shelter herself in front of the town and shipping. During one of these heavy bouts of firing, we saw that the gaff carrying her only flag, came down with a run. A shout went up that she had surrendered. You may depend it did not take our fellows with visions of "prize money" very long to jump up on the gun carriages and look over the gunwales to see if it were true. While thus watching the *Huascar* we saw a very gallant act performed. Several men came up from below, one of them picking up a flag and holding it out with his arms extended, while the other men cleared away the halliards and erected the flag-staff. While they were doing this, the Gatling gun of the *Shah* picking up the range, shot down the man holding the flag, but the others pluckily managed to hoist it on the staff before going below. The engagement continued; the *Shah* firing a torpedo which never reached its billet, because the speed of a torpedo in those early days was only nine or ten knots per hour, and as the speed of the *Huascar* was eleven knots, she had only to "side step" to give it a miss! About 4.30 p.m. it was seen that there was something wrong with the *Huascar's* turret, which appeared to have jammed. It was noticed that after she had fired at one of us, she had to steam round in order to fire at the other, so our captain thought it was a lovely chance to board her, if the *Shah* would only keep up a heavy fire on her. At all events, a whisper went around the deck that our skipper

intended to run alongside and drop his bower anchor aboard her. We were going full speed and were gradually closing on her, when to our disgust, up went the "recall" signal on the *Shah*. Captain Chatfield had been nearly four years in command of the *Amethyst* with many of the officers; and the great majority of the men were tried and experienced sailors, having had the experience of fighting the Ashanties when forming part of the Naval Brigade under Sir Garnet Wolseley. The remainder of the officers and men had served under him for three years, whereas the *Shah* had only lately arrived on the station from home. We, knowing our captain's sound and solid judgment, could trust ourselves with him anywhere.

During the whole time we had been together, no man had ever seen him give vent to his feeling as he did when that "recall" went up. He was a very reserved gentleman, but the men on the lower deck knew that he had a kind heart, however severe he appeared to be on the surface. I fancy I can see him now, standing on the starboard "dicky," or conning platform, stamping his foot with vexation at losing such a splendid chance. We could all hear him call out to our Navigator, "Miller, make a note of that; this is the third time I have been recalled out of action."

I need not tell you how disappointed every officer and man felt at having to retire and play at "long balls" with very little effect on the *Huascar*, as it was impossible for our 64 pounder shells or the 7-inch guns of the *Shah* to penetrate her turret or her armoured sides, as she had the upper bulwarks lowered over the side to give additional strength and protection; but we had knocked away all her top hamper.

Just before 5 p.m., the light became so bad that we had to cease fire, and the *Amethyst* received instructions to patrol the south side of the bay, the *Shah* patrolling the north side.

At 8 p.m., the watch was called and mustered. It happened to be my first watch on deck, from 8 p.m. to 12 midnight, and we were instructed to wear our side arms; "look-outs" being told to keep a good look-out for any movements of the ships anchored in the bay.

As the guns remained "cleared for action," the watch naturally formed themselves into little groups between the guns, talking about the happenings of the day, and wondering whether the *Huascar* would give us the slip during the night.

I will describe as clearly as I can the scene on our gun deck, as it impressed itself on my mind during the engagement. I, being a "rearman" at my gun, had a splendid opportunity of taking stock. The upper deck of the *Amethyst* was absolutely clear of any obstruction, excepting the funnel casing in midships, and the guns at the side from the break of the fo'c'sle to the poop. As our only covering was the sky there was a clean view, making it possible to see plainly what was taking place on any part of the deck.

The captain, with a midshipman in attendance, posted himself on the side of the poop nearest the *Huascar*. The navigating officer, Lieutenant A. W. Miller, stood at the Standard compass, while the first lieutenant, A. K. Bickford, our gunnery officer with a midshipman and bugler in attendance, posted himself at some point of vantage from where he could direct the fire of the guns, giving orders to raise or lower the sights as required. There were no range-finders in those days, the range being found by good judging of distance from the object.

It was a glorious and exhilarating sight, and something to gladden the heart of any man who had the least bit of spirit in him, to see the fourteen men forming each gun crew—when only one broadside was manned—with their jumpers off, bareheaded and barefooted,

working away like demons, and as happy as birds, as you could see from their faces.

One could see the six guns of the "broadside" in the different stages of being trained, fired or loaded; the side tackles, with their heavy blocks for running the guns out in the firing position; the heavy breeching secured to ring-bolts in the ship's side, to prevent the guns, when fired, from recoiling too far; the handspike men, shaping to train or lay the gun for elevation, as required. It reminded me of the pictures I had seen, and which can still be seen in most art galleries, of the fighting between-decks in the days of Nelson; days long gone by, never to be seen again.

Although the *Huascar* was cleverly handled, she made rotten shooting, several of the shots she aimed at us striking the water just short enough for the projectiles to ricochet over us. We could plainly see her projectiles, owing to their high trajectory, coming through the air like large blacksmith's anvils. One or two funny incidents occurred during the afternoon. The town of Ilo, being situated in the tropics, and our engagement taking place just off this town, made it very warm and close between decks, and especially down in the stokehold, where the poor stokers must have felt the heat badly, as we were steaming hard the whole time, and there was no forced draught in those days! During a lull in the firing, the master-at-arms, ship's steward, and schoolmaster, and several others of the "ground tier," i.e., those excused from duty on deck, came up for a blow of fresh air, and gathered together on the fo'c'sle, having a look round, and no doubt admiring the scenery! Old Pierola must have known that our "jaunty" and his crowd were up for an airing, the *Huascar* let fly both her guns at us; you could see the shots coming. You should have seen how they cleared that fo'c'sle! Did they walk or run down the ladder? No, they fell down! They never moved so

smartly in all their life before! We could not help laughing to see how they tumbled over each other, and they were only just in time, for the two projectiles passed just over the fo'c'sle and struck the water on the other side, ricochetting away out of sight.

We had another bit of fun with the No. 6 in our gun's crew, who had climbed up on the gun carriage to look over the gunwale. He was a big fellow, called "Lusty" Adams. While looking round and giving all the news, he saw the smoke from the guns of the *Huascar*. Old "Lusty," in jumping down, caught the bottom of his trousers over the trunnion sight, ripping them right up to the hip, while "Lusty" himself went sprawling along the deck. When we found he had not hurt himself very much, but stood up to his gun with his trousers flying *à la Directoire*, we roared with laughter at him. There he stood, with his bare leg showing, and not a muscle of his face moving. He was told to go below and change; as he passed me I was on the preventer tackle, and, seeing me smiling, he looked at me like a buck rat, and said, "What the ——are you laughing at?" I replied, "Nothing, 'Lusty,' nothing."

At 9 p.m. the "look-out" on the fo'c'sle reported a light on the starboard bow, which was soon seen to be the lights of a ship under way, and going south. As she closed on us we could see that she was brilliantly lit up, with lights showing through all her port-holes; the glare of her lights making it very dark between the steamer and the shore. All hands on deck were straining their eyes, endeavouring to make out the *Huascar* in-shore of the ship. Somehow or other, we felt that she was giving us the slip by taking advantage of the cover which the ship provided with her glare of lights.

Our captain reported to the flagship that a steamer was leaving Ilo, and going south, and asked for instructions. We had to continue our patrol.

Naval Engagement

We heard after arriving at Iquique the next day that the *Shah*, when it became dark, sent a steamboat with out-rigger torpedoes on long poles, which could be rigged out by tackles; the torpedoes, after making contact with their object, were to be exploded; but when the party in the boat got amongst the shipping they found that the *Huascar* had left. The steamboat then returned to the *Shah* and reported to the Admiral.

A signal was sent to our captain to proceed south—I believe the *Shah* went north. So the *Amethyst* steamed away at full speed, keeping a good look-out on all the little bays, and eventually at 11 p.m. we came to a place where we could see the riding, or anchor lights, of several ships. The speed was reduced as we approached, gradually easing down until we got abreast of the lights, then the engines were stopped.

The lifeboat's crew were called away to man their boat, which was lowered into the water very quickly. The officer of the watch, in charge of the cutter, was instructed to make his way in amongst the shipping, and if the *Huascar* were there, to light a signal light and then make for some rendezvous where we could pick him and his crew up again.

Both watches were now on deck; in fact, all hands were up, the ground tier as well. We watched the cutter disappear in the darkness, everyone taking up a position where he could best see the ships at anchor.

The captain then sent for the chief engineer, who stood at the bottom of the poop ladder, while the captain, at the top, gave him his instructions. The men standing near heard him say that should we get the signal that the *Huascar* was there, he was to put his best leg forward when the engine-room telegraph showed "full speed ahead," as he wanted to make the best of his way to the Admiral, and report.

Every neck was craned out of the gun-ports, anxiously waiting for the signal, with all eyes concentrated on the

lights in-shore. At last we heard the splash of the cutter's oars, and shortly afterwards she appeared, coming alongside. The officer reported that the *Huascar* had gone south, probably to Iquique, to which place we also proceeded.

The watch being called, all the excitement soon died down, while those men not required for duty gradually dwindled away, after yarning together for a time, and went below in turn, leaving the watch on deck to carry on.

We arrived at Iquique at 8 o'clock the next morning, and there, to our intense surprise, we saw the *Huascar* at anchor between the lines of the Peruvian Fleet! After giving us the slip she must have steamed full pelt to Iquique and surrendered!

Admiral de Horsey must have received information that the *Huascar* had given herself up, because the *Shah* arrived shortly afterwards and anchored quite close to the Peruvian flagship, the *Amethyst* anchoring between two other ships. The Admiral at once sent an officer on board the Peruvian flagship in order to obtain all particulars. The *Shah* and *Amethyst* cleared for action, and so remained, until our Admiral was satisfied with the conditions of the *Huascar's* surrender, these conditions being eventually brought to him by the officer.

We heard that Pierola, and all the officers and crew of the *Huascar* were prisoners, the ship being in charge of an armed guard. Permission was given to our officers to board her, so a boat full from each ship went on board to examine and take stock of the damage done. The mast and funnels were riddled with shot, the funnel casing, engine hatches, and everything above decks being shattered to pieces. The turret was marked all over where shells had struck it, but there was no part where one had penetrated through it, neither had any projectile gone through the armoured sides of the

ship. It was found, on going below, that several fragments of shells had worked their way down between the deck and the turret, thereby jamming it and preventing it from revolving.

All turret ships in the British Navy are provided with a flap or glacis around the bottom of the turret, and are fitted with screws so as to raise or lower it, this construction preventing anything from getting between deck and turret.

Our captain reported on board the flagship during the morning, and before he left the *Shah* the Admiral told him that he would inspect the ship's company of the *Amethyst* on the following day at 10 a.m. On the captain's return the news flew around like greased lightning, and all hands set to, getting things shipshape. After dinner, the bo'sun's mate piped "Make and mend clothes," i.e., the afternoon off to get our kits ready.

As we were in the tropics, the rig for the day would be drill frocks, with blue collars and cuffs with little rows of tape around each; white trousers and straw hats —quite a different kind of hat from that worn at the present time. Fashion changes amongst sailors as it does with ladies. Our hats had very large brims turned up like a Mexican's sombrero; our flannels were cut down, exposing our chest, the open part being bound with blue jean and having eyelet holes at the bottom to lace up a couple of inches, with very narrow tape.

Every man was at his locker turning out his best suit, seeing that it was all right, and polishing up his boots and shoes—which are only worn for Sunday divisions or for going ashore.

The next morning the hands were called at 5 a.m., giving us plenty of time to polish up and make everything look spick and span, both on deck and below. Our lower deck was always like a hound's tooth, and, if need be, you could eat your food off the floor.

When the Admiral came on board, "Tommy Pipes," the bo'sun, piped him over the side with a long blast on his silver whistle. The divisions fell in when he arrived, soon afterwards being dismissed. I believe each officer was presented to the Admiral, who shook hands with them all.

A little while later, the bo'sun's mate came running for'ard and piped "Clear lower deck, everyone aft," which meant to say that every man Jack of the ship's company had to fall in on the quarter-deck. The Admiral was standing at the break of the poop, with his hands on the rails, and looking down on us as we rushed aft at the double. Our captain and first lieutenant were standing by his side, while the other officers took up a position under the break of the poop. The Admiral then addressed the ship's company, telling us how pleased he was to have such a body of officers and men under his command.

He also told us that he was sure, from what our captain had said, that he was proud of his boys. Referring to the engagement, he explained that his original desire had been to compel the *Huascar* to surrender without our sacrificing any lives. The Admiral added that if the *Huascar* had not given us the slip during the night and surrendered to the Peruvian fleet, he had intended to capture her the next day at any cost.

The Admiral complimented Captain Chatfield on his smartness in manœuvring his ship, and the officers and men on our effective gun-fire. The ship's company was then dismissed, but had to remain on deck, except the mess caterers, who went below to stand by their messes. The Admiral seemed to be pleased with the cleanliness of our comfortable mess deck, and remarked on the fine open space outside the messes.

He came on deck by the fo'c'sle ladder; the men clearing away to the other side of the deck while the Admiral went aft, admiring the old truck guns, every-

thing attached to them being beautifully clean. After going the rounds and wishing the officers "good-bye," he was piped over the side by the bo'sun, who repeated the dose when his boat pushed off. The captain then gave instructions to the first Lieutenant to pipe down for the remainder of the day.

We remained a few days at Iquique, and then sailed for Coquimbo. About a week later news was brought down by the coasting steamers that Pierola had been tried and sentenced to be banished from his country for a period of five years. We were unable to find out what punishment the two lieutenants and the crew of the *Huascar* received. None, I expect! The Peruvians seemed proud of them!

With all due respect to our Admiral's wish not to sacrifice our lives, I can honestly say that the general feeling amongst the men on our lower deck was one of keen disappointment at not having brought the engagement to a more decisive issue.

Whenever we went on shore, and got into conversation about it, the impression was that the British had lost a certain amount of prestige in failing to capture the *Huascar*.

Prestige, to a Maritime Nation, is the salt of its life!

CHAPTER XXI

ANOTHER VISIT TO JUAN FERNANDEZ, AND OUR LAST CHRISTMAS AT SEA.

WHILE lying at Coquimbo in July, 1877, our captain received a telegram informing him that the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Eten*, and another vessel, were ashore on the rocks at Ventena Point, between Coquimbo and Valparaiso.

We proceeded there at once, to render what assistance we could. Arriving at the Point just as it was getting dark, a cutter was lowered and, with Lieutenant Ford E. W. Lambart in charge, went in-shore to try to rescue the crew of the *Eten*. She was found to be a complete wreck, with heavy seas breaking over her.

Owing to the strong wind blowing, and the heavy seas running, it was impossible to approach near enough to help the men on the wreck, and the cutter had to return to the ship with its mission unfulfilled; but the *Amethyst* stood by the wreck all night. At dawn the next morning, the weather was much calmer, so the cutter went in and was able to approach close enough to take off those who had survived the night. They had had a terrible experience, clinging to the meagre shelter that was afforded by parts of the hull of their vessel.

The *Amethyst* then steamed to Los Vilos, a place further down the coast, to bring on board some of the survivors who had managed to reach the shore. We

also embarked several members of the crew of the s.s. *Atacama*, which we saw lying stranded broadside on to the shore, and took them all to Valparaiso.

The next few months were spent in visiting various places on the coast, and as the end of our Commission was drawing near, the captain decided to pay another visit to Juan Fernandez, being, no doubt, anxious to make further inquiries about young Tattersall. We arrived there on November 9th. An officer was sent on shore to find out from the colonists, who were still there, if they had any news. They informed him that they had been out with the dogs, searching for him, for more than a week after the ship had left, but could not find any trace of him. Two of the colonists came down to the boat, and from what our fellows could make out, they seemed to be getting tired of their life on the island.

We left Juan Fernandez, November 10th, 1877, and sailed for Valparaiso; remaining there only a few days before proceeding to our old rendezvous, Coquimbo.

The *Amethyst* left Coquimbo for the last time, sailing for Valparaiso December 12th, about 4 p.m. The next day we came across a Chilean steamer, broken down and helpless. The captain stopped and took her in tow to Valparaiso, arriving there late that night, when we cast her off and dropped anchor in the bay.

The men were informed by a notice on the board that the ship would be at sea on Christmas Day, the ship leaving for Talcahuano on December 20th. It was very considerate on the part of the first lieutenant to let the men know in time, as the caterers were able to get what they required for our last Christmas dinner together. Leaving Valparaiso we steamed slowly down south, and when Christmas morning came, all our preparations were in order.

The men were pleased when they heard that the captain and officers intended going around the mess deck to sample the nice things the men had provided for their

last Christmas in the *Amethyst*. The Negro Minstrels assembled with their full orchestra; the sweepers in their grotesque get-up, sweeping away old Father Time for the last time before paying off. The day was spent in the usual fashion, with the added consolation that our next Christmas would be in England.

The ship arrived at Talcahuano, December 27th. There were several sailing ships anchored in the bay, which proved to be whalers, Talcahuano being then much used as a rendezvous for those who searched the southern seas for their harvest. As we steamed to our anchorage, I noticed the jaws of a very large whale lying on the beach, bleached white by the sun. Boats came alongside offering whale's teeth for sale, some of them most beautifully carved, done by the whalers when at sea, I suppose.

The stewards, returning from the shore after their morning's shopping, brought off the news that horses could be hired for the day very cheaply. Hearing that general leave was to be given in a few days' time, the men of the port watch—my watch—whose first leave it was, met and decided to have a day's outing on horseback, and to keep together during the time we were on shore. A list was taken of those willing to join the company, over fifty men giving in their names. Our next job was to elect officials and a small committee to make all arrangements.

Old Jim Murray, one of our quartermasters, was unanimously chosen to take charge of the troop. We named him the "Brigadier-General." A bombardier of Marines, a six-footer, was selected as old Jim's aide-de-camp. Petty officers of the watch were placed in charge of sections of the men; in fact, every detail was gone into by the committee so as to make the outing a success.

The day before the leave was granted an order for the horses was sent on shore by one of the stewards; they were to be ready saddled at 9 a.m. the next day.

Trip to Juan Fernandez

On landing the next morning, we made our way to the hotel where the horses were waiting for us and selected our mounts. I picked out a quiet chestnut with a good saddle and bridle. Our fellows had sampled bare-back pony riding at Juan Fernandez, and they soon felt the difference when sitting in a comfortable saddle.

After the men had had time for a couple of drinks, the bugler, who was in our watch, and who had brought his bugle with him, sounded the "assembly." We mounted our horses by order of the "brigadier" and formed into sections of fours.

Jim Murray placed himself at the head of his troop, having the bombardier on his starboard hand, and the bugler on his port, with two petty officers to bring up the rear.

When everything was ready, we moved off by order from the "brigadier" through the town towards Concepcion, a fairly large town about seven miles across country.

We were a very happy though motley crowd: sailors, marines, cooks, and stewards. The people standing at their doors or looking out of their windows were smiling and laughing at the unusual sight. Several senoritas were waving their hankies as we passed by. Jim kept his troop well in hand while passing through the town, keeping them going at a steady pace until well clear; we then had a lovely canter across the grass, keeping to a beaten track which we were told led towards Concepcion. The country ahead was a large expanse of grassland, without any signs of dwellings or cultivation. We came across several horses grazing on the open space, roaming about without anyone looking after them. We only met four men on horse-back during our journey across.

Approaching Concepcion, we closed our ranks, making ourselves look ship-shape. On our entering the

town, people looked surprised to see such a large party of men from the ship, on horse back.

As we trotted into the large square or Plaza, an officer and two vigilantes came towards us, the officer holding up his hand for us to stop. Our "brigadier" gave the order, "Halt!" The officer then came over and walked down through our ranks, probably to see if we were armed. Having satisfied himself, he smiled, and waved his hand to Jim to carry on. Keeping in good formation, we ambled around the town, returning to the Plaza, where we halted, while a consultation took place amongst the committee about the arrangements for dinner. We were beginning to feel a bit peckish and thirsty after our long ride.

It was decided to make for a large hotel close to the Plaza. We marched over to the hotel and formed into line in single file, halting with our horses' heads towards the pavement. The bombardier then went along the ranks with his little round hat—the kind worn at that time—and collected enough money from each man to pay for his dinner and a long "sleever" of beer.

The "brigadier" gave the order "dismount;" men from the hotel taking charge of the horses while we repaired to a large room and sat down to a fine spread, to which we did ample justice.

When everything was cleared away, we settled down to a sing-song, or smoking concert, with plenty of long "sleevers" to wash down our dinner, having thoroughly enjoyed the great change from our usual fare. Jim gave us a long dinner-hour, nearer two than one! When the "assembly" was sounded, we were all in a very merry mood. There was great fun picking out our horses, some of the men looking for their "Saucy Sue" and others for their "Blue-Eyed Jane!" Some gave their horses the quaintest names imaginable; but at last we were all mounted.

The "brigadier" gave orders to "form fours;" we

had another swing around the square, to the amusement of the people, then made tracks for the open country on our return journey, having fine fun racing and chasing each other, and having several falls, but nothing serious happened until we got to within a mile of Talcahuano.

One of our "leading hands," whose name was Hunt—known as "Ginger"—was racing another fellow, when his horse put his foot in a hole, and came down. Ginger was shot forward over the horse's head, luckily not hurting himself very much, except that he was a little shaken. Unfortunately it was found that the horse had broken his leg, so there was nothing for it but to leave him there and report the matter to the owner. Hunt mounted behind another man, bringing with him his saddle and bridle, which appeared to be of more value than the horse, as horses were then very cheap in that part of the world.

Returning to the hotel, we handed our horses over to the owners, and paid our bill for them, being quite satisfied with our day's outing. We spent the evening and night in enjoying ourselves as only sailors know how, getting as much fun out of life as it was possible to squeeze during our two days on shore.

We remained a month at Talcahuano, sailing for Valparaiso January 27th, 1878. Arriving there, we moored ship well over on the right side of the bay, close to what was once a Naval depôt or store.

Parties of men were sent to the depôt to remove an accumulation of projectiles which had to be brought to England.

The sailing pinnace was used to bring them off, the shells being stowed down the spare chain locker, or any other empty space. Our men were employed bringing them off, making several trips a day, for a whole week. I should think we brought off fifty tons of shells, which, later on, proved to be a blessing in disguise.

CHAPTER XXII

HOMEWARD BOUND

We had settled down and were waiting for our relief, whiling away the evenings with plenty of dancing and singing on the forepart of the upper deck, our Negro band supplying the music.

As it was February, and the height of summer in that latitude, the weather conditions were perfect, bright sunshine—not too hot—during the day, and, as the evenings closed in, a stillness would creep over the harbour, broken only by the sounds of music or songs from the ships. In a clear sky, the lone star of Chile could be seen away by itself, shining brightly over the hills to the south. The Chileans have adopted that "lone star" on a blue ground as their "Jack," and as the most conspicuous part of their national flag.

In the first week of the month a man-of-war hove in sight from the south; she proved to be H.M. Sloop *Penguin*, Commander A. C. H. Paget. She only remained two days, then left for Coquimbo, returning again in the middle of February. While lying in Valparaiso with us the officers frequently visited each other. I do not think it will be out of place if I add to my book a photograph of a group of officers and men—given to me by a neighbour who was at that time serving as an officer in the *Penguin*—which strikingly shows the difference between the Naval uniform of that day (1878) and the present time.

Officers of H.M.S. Penguin at Valparaiso 1878

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Homeward Bound

Everything, it is said, comes to those who wait. One fine morning our eyes met a sight to gladden them. It was a man-of-war coming around the Point from the south'ard, which proved to be our "relief," H.M.S. *Turquoise*. One precious stone to relieve another! You should have seen the quiet, silent joy of the married men, their faces lighted up with the thought that if everything went right they would be home with their wives and children in about two months. Everyone seemed anxious to be off, but we were delayed a day to embark a human cargo, for in those far-off days it was customary for a ship returning to England, which had sufficient accommodation, to take on board all court-martial prisoners who had been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment to complete their sentence in a Naval prison in England; those sentenced to penal servitude were sent to Portland convict prison on the ship's arrival in England.

We embarked twelve or more prisoners for passage to England and among the batch of prisoners was our old ship-mate, whose spirit—as anyone could see—was completely broken.

On the 2nd March, 1878, we started on our homeward journey, receiving a good cheer from our relief. As soon as we were round the Point we made sail, going south under steam and sail at a good speed, until close on Wellington Straits, when we furled sails.

When steaming through the Straits, ships are compelled to tie up or anchor for the night, getting under way at daybreak and steaming hard for the next anchorage, because the channel is very narrow at places, and requires careful navigation, owing to the great depth of water at some of the so-called anchorages. Small ships have at times been tied to trees with hawsers for the night.

We anchored one night at a cosy little bight, with high mountains all around us, and numerous large

trees, their green foliage making a pretty sight. We were up and away the next morning, steaming full speed, and the hands down on their knees on handspikes holystoning decks, when the ship was brought up with a sudden jerk and a grating sound; the men on their knees were thrown forward on their faces, and the spars and rigging shook like leaves, but nothing came down.

The engines were reversed to full speed astern, but it was no good; we were hung up on an uncharted rock, with our bows well up and the stern low down in the water.

The navigator, having two of the Quartermasters in the dinghy, took soundings all around the ship, and it was found that the ship was aground on a ledge of rocks, but with plenty of water all round. As the Straits at this spot were fairly narrow, two officers went on shore to select a large tree, as near in line with the keel as possible. It was no use trying to kedge her off owing to the depth of water.

An eleven-inch cable-laid hemp hawser was taken on shore and secured to the tree selected, the inner end brought off to the ship and led over the stern, and the screw purchase used for hoisting the propeller out of the water when under sail was secured to the inner end of the hawser, which was then brought for'ard to the capstan.

While preparations were being made for getting the ship off, parties of men were detailed to throw overboard the whole of the shells and stores we had taken on board at Valparaiso. It was fortunate we had them to throw and thus enable us to lighten the ship!

As most of the shells were stowed for'ard in the cabin lockers it was a great help, as it would, of course, make the forepart of the ship much more buoyant when they were removed. I was down in the locker for three hours passing those 20-lb. shells over my head until

A Group of Blue-jackets
H.M.S. Penguin 1878 at Valparaiso
Showing the difference of rig with the present day

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my arms were fit to drop off, but I was young, and soon got over it. Several of our own 64-pounder shells were also dropped over the side; in fact, anything moveable of any weight was thrown overboard to lighten her.

The captain was afraid the ship would break her back, as the after-part of the ship was in deep water, and while we were passing up the shells the captain and first lieutenant were down on the lower deck examining the iron stanchions between decks to see how they were standing the strain. I remember hearing the captain ask the question, "Where was the ship built, in a Government or private yard?" He seemed satisfied when told the *Amethyst* was built at Devonport Dockyard.

When all surplus shells and stores were thrown overboard, and the purchase fall ready, every man Jack manned the capstan bars—there were no steam capstans in those days—spinning around the capstan until the purchase fall was taut, and a strain brought on the hawser. The critical moment had arrived: engines reversed, going full speed astern, the men with their chests bearing hard against the bars, legs straight and bare feet pressing on the deck, using every ounce of strength in their bodies. Officers joined in with the men on the swifter, heaving and cheering, as with the heave-O, all together, we felt the ship move. Around flew the capstan to take in the slack of the purchase, as the ship gradually glided into deep water, bringing intense relief to us all; the ship then steamed over to a spot where we could anchor. Bill Jane, our gunnery instructor, was the diver who went down to ascertain the damage. He reported that the forefoot and keel were torn off as far as ten feet abaft the foremast.

The first lieutenant at once took steps to lash the bows of the ship together with a chain cable. The end was shackled to an eye-bolt on the fo'c'sle, and the chain led underneath the bows and brought up the other side,

being hauled well taut with a purchase, and then secured with long spike nails driven into the deck; then brought back again to the other side until the length of cable was expended; having six turns of cable underneath the bows as far aft as the forerigging; and so we arrived in England with our bows lashed up! During the remainder of the voyage home the pumps were manned to keep the water under for one hour in every watch.

The ship got under way the next morning; but before going aloft, the look-out man was instructed to keep a sharp look out for seaweed and report to the officer of the watch if any hove in sight. For the remainder of the trip through the straits we could hear the man at the masthead shouting, "Kelp right ahead, sir."

From a survey made at the place where we ran ashore, it was found that a long string of seaweed, known as kelp, grew on these submerged rocks, some of it just showing above water. The navigator gave all kelp a wide berth while in the Straits!

We arrived at Punta Arenas in the Magellan Straits, remaining the night only, and then away on our journey across the Atlantic. Whenever the wind was favourable, the captain took advantage of it by making sail to help us along.

It could easily be seen by the chart that the ship was making for Rio de Janeiro. We were enjoying fine weather with the breeze in our favour, so soon covered the distance to that port, anchoring in our old berth inside the Island Fort.

We again coaled ship, and laid in a stock of provisions for our last lap of five thousand miles, remaining in Rio for three days only. We started off on our journey, I silently bidding farewell to that beautiful harbour where I had enjoyed so many happy hours in the skiff, and had experienced such a narrow escape from being dashed to pieces on the rocks.

Homeward Bound

The ship had left Rio about four days when we ran into very rough weather. The ship was steaming along with only the fore and aft sails set, when, after divisions in the evening, the sky clouded over, making it very dark. Little notice was taken of it, as we were not under sail, but about 7 p.m., just as the officers had finished dinner and the men were sitting about yarning, the ship was struck without the slightest warning by a terrific force of wind like a pampero, tornado and typhoon all lashed together! It struck the ship fair on the port beam, blowing the head sail to ribbons and only leaving the roping behind. The iron shackles on the sheets of the trysails and spanks snapped like carrots, driving the sails like a board against the lee rigging and causing the ship to heel over to starboard with a heavy list. With the wind came rain, thunder and lightning, the latter being intensely vivid. The mess traps, tin kettles and dishes were sent flying across the deck. Everyone rushed on deck, there being no necessity to pipe "clear lower deck!" for not a soul remained below. Even the prisoners, who are always out of irons when at sea, rushed on deck and lent a helping hand. The captain managed to get up on the bridge, and shouted out, "Not a man above the netting," i.e. the gunwales. The helm was put hard over, trying to bring the ship's head to the wind, but she would not budge. The wind had got her flat on the port broadside, and until the trysails were in she would not move; all hands were hauling at the inhaul and brails, trying to drag the sails from the rigging. When the vivid flashes of lightning came, I noticed the prisoners, wet through, hauling away on the brails, no doubt glad of the change from their close quarters down the "screw alley," i.e. a passage-way under the wardroom.

At last the sails were brailed up, but the ship would not come up in the wind, although the helm was down,

The wind held her in its grip, and nothing could be done until its force was spent. It was the opinion of the officers that if the ship had been under full sail at the time we should have been lost. It came on so suddenly that, even with only fore and aft sails set, the lee gunwale was for a time under water.

Eventually, the wind eased down, the ship's head was brought up to the wind, and the yards braced sharp up. The watch was then called, everyone changing their wet clothes, and so we settled down to a very rough night.

The next day the ship was caught in what we were told was a circular gale; the ship had to run before it, taking us miles out of our course. Hands went aloft to take a couple of reefs in the topsails before setting them. The ship was scudding along with two reefs in the topsails and rolling so heavily that life-lines had to be stretched along the deck and secured to the rear part of the guns, to help us along the deck.

The gale lasted three days, and then eased down to a steady breeze; the ship was brought on her course for England, all sail being set, with the wind right aft. We went sailing along for four weeks, making a big hole in the trip across the Atlantic, which cheered us up after the rough experience we had undergone, and made us feel glad to be alive. It reminded me of that old favourite sea song: "Rolling home to Merrie England."

The Eddystone Lighthouse hove in sight, May 18th, 1878, after we had taken seventy-eight days on our journey home from Valparaiso.

What memories crowded into my mind when I saw the lighthouse; memories of my childhood days, when I used to stretch myself on the Hoe, watching the ships go by and looking into the great beyond. I felt that during the four years since we passed the lighthouse on our outward voyage I had experienced enough

adventure and had seen sufficient of the world to satisfy the wanderlust of any boy.

The ship was made fast to a buoy inside the breakwater for the night, the next morning two dockyard tugs towed us up the harbour, passing close to my old home on Drake's Island. I could see the house where we lived and where I spent my happy childhood, having a kind and gentle Irish mother to care for me. It is only those who have lost their mother, as I did when quite a child, who can realise the great loss it is to a boy; the loss of his best friend.

The ship was moored to a buoy abreast of the dockyard. The Commander-in-Chief inspected us the next forenoon and seemed pleased with the smartness of the ship's company and the cleanliness of the ship.

During the first dinner-hour spent in England—visitors being allowed on board—the ship was surrounded with watermen's boats bringing off mothers anxious to see their sons; and wives with their children, anxious to see their husbands after being parted for four long years; some of the kiddies never having seen their daddy before.

It was quite lively on the mess deck with the joy of reunion; I and others who had no one to meet them cleared out as soon as we had had our dinner, and went on deck to look round.

The following morning powder lighters came alongside, into which we discharged our powder and shell while at the buoy; the ship was then towed and secured alongside the North Jetty, close to North Corner. We soon set about getting our spars and rigging down from aloft and returned to store in the dockyard, hoisting our guns out to be returned to the gun-wharf, and clearing the ship of everything on board to be returned to store, except the three lower masts which were left bare.

While getting our guns out, we received a visit from the Royal Princes, Albert Victor and George of Wales, the latter His Majesty King George V. They were cadets under training in H.M.S. *Britannia* at Dartmouth the old ship which turned out so many famous officers for the Navy.

The Royal Princes, with a party of cadets, were visiting Devonport Dockyard in order to gain a thorough knowledge of all matters connected with the Navy. Seeing H.M.S. *Amethyst* was hoisting out her guns, they came on board to observe the method adopted by our first lieutenant in hoisting them out over the side, and took a keen interest in the procedure.

Should His Majesty ever deign to read these lines, they may recall to his mind those days of long ago when he was preparing himself for his career in that grand Service, the Royal Navy, to become our second Sailor King.

The ship paid off, and the pennant was hauled down on June 1st, 1878; each man being allowed fourteen days' leave for each year served in a foreign station. Those men who commissioned the ship on July 1st, 1873, were granted ten weeks' leave; while we, who joined her in June, 1874, had eight weeks' leave. In those days there was no subsistence allowance granted, men having to provide for their own maintenance out of the money saved during their service. Many men had to return on board their depôt ship before their leave had expired, owing to their having spent the small "pay day" they had in paying off.

When we were paid off we all fell in on the starboard side of the quarter-deck, and as our names were called we entered the captain's cabin, walked up to the table, saluted, and received what was standing to our credit on the books, together with the amount which we had on deposit in the bank. There was a custom in vogue in those days for a few Executive officers to stand out-

side and count the men's money for them, to ascertain whether the amount given them was correct, before the men left the ship.

Several officers had arranged themselves along under the poop, wishing the men "good-bye" as they passed along.

I spent the greatest part of my leave in Ireland, also a week with my father and sisters in Wales.

CHAPTER XXIII

H.M.S. "CAMBRIDGE," AUGUST 1878—DECEMBER, 1880

I JOINED H.M.S. *Cambridge*, an old three-decker, then used as the gunnery school for the Western Division, on August 4th, 1878; she being commanded at that time by Captain Thomas Le H. Ward. The next day I was detailed to form a class of twenty-two men, which consisted of fourteen of my old shipmates in the *Amethyst*, and eight men from various other ships; we remaining together right through our course of instruction.

I think it will be quite in order if I relate the procedure adopted in the year 1878 for the distribution of a ship's company returning from a foreign station to pay off. A week or so before the ship was due to arrive in England, a notice would be posted up on the lower deck, instructing the men to write down the following details and to give them to the master-at-arms:

The depôt to which he wished to return after his leave had expired; Devonport or Portsmouth, in other words, West Country or East Country as it was then known.

Whether he wished to volunteer for the gunnery school to qualify for seaman gunner or to remain what was then known as a general-service man. In the latter case he would return to his respective depôt ship, either H.M.S. *Royal Adelaide* at Devonport or H.M.S. *Duke of Wellington* at Portsmouth.

H.M.S. "Cambridge"

Mechanical and stoker ratings returned to their own depôt ship, H.M.S. *Indus* at Devonport; there being no naval barracks at that time, every man had to return to a ship.

The majority of men returned to general service, as the percentage of gunnery ratings in a ship in those days was comparatively small. Gunnery men, and those volunteering for a course of gunnery, had to return either to H.M.S. *Cambridge* or H.M.S. *Excellent* at their respective ports.

A man wishing to volunteer for a course of training in gunnery had to be of very good character, to have been an Able Seaman for twelve months, or to have received a special recommendation from his commanding officer. All seamen gunners had to sign for a period of five years.

I need not enter into the details of our intensive gunnery course, which trains our bluejackets to perform—in addition to their job as a seaman—the duties of the artillery infantry, of ordnance corps in the Army. In short, we were trained to be highly efficient gunnery men, fit to go anywhere.

We were examined on completing the number of days allowed to each of the eight different branches of instruction, or subjects into which the Course of Gunnery was divided. Then at the end of the course came a final examination by a staff gunnery lieutenant in the four principal subjects, i.e. heavy and light guns, field and machine guns, rifle and field exercises, and ammunition. The officer would take the whole day to examine four men. A special class of qualified men formed the guns' crews or squads for the men under examination to drill, under the eagle eye of the officer with his note-book and pencil in hand, ready to put down a big or small dot for every mistake made. I am pleased to say I passed all my examinations with credit.

When the whole class had been examined, we had to appear before the captain to be rated first-class seamen gunner, which fact is entered on one's parchment certificate. I may say that every promotion, from a boy to the time a man leaves the service, is entered on his certificate, together with the dates, the ship served in at the time, and the captain's signature. This proved especially useful to me, as I was thus able to verify my references in writing my reminiscences.

The rating of first-class seaman gunner increased our pay by fourpence per day, and entitled us to wear a badge, on the right arm, of a gun surmounted by a crown.

It may be of some information to you to know that in the Navy distinctive badges, showing the special qualifications of a man, are worn on his right arm; while good-conduct badges, surmounted with anchors, and denoting the man's rating and conduct, are worn on the left arm. Chief petty officers—except the engineering branch—wear their distinctive badges on the collar of the coat. I have briefly described the badges worn by men on the lower deck during my time, but they are constantly changing. The next step forward for me was to qualify for trained torpedo man. The opportunities for doing so in the year 1879 were very limited. There being no torpedo school stationed at Devonport, men who had been trained in the *Cambridge* were sent around to Portsmouth in gunboats to qualify on board H.M.S. *Vernon*, whose commander at the time was the late Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Arthur Wilson.

In the early part of March a notice was posted up for volunteers to qualify for torpedo men. I gave my name and number to the gunnery officer. A few days later a list of eighty-four names of men who had volunteered, showing their qualifications in gunnery, was displayed on the notice board, with a separate list of the men selected—I was one of them to form a class of

twenty-five. The men selected were those who had passed the highest in the examination. Attached to H.M.S. *Cambridge*, and used as an armourer's shop, was an old dismasted sloop, the *Perseus*, a part of which was set aside as a lecture room for men selected to qualify in the *Vernon*. A lieutenant lent from H.M.S. *Vernon* was the lecturer, and he was assisted by a chief torpedo instructor. The classes received a course of six weeks' lectures in the elementary principles of electricity, also instruction in general torpedo work, thereby giving the West Country men an advantage over the men from H.M.S. *Excellent;* the latter, I was told, having to go straight from their gunnery school course to torpedo, which, no doubt, accounted for the majority of the men from H.M.S. *Cambridge* passing their examinations.

After our preliminary rub up, the class of twenty-five was drafted to H.M.S. *Vernon*, May 4th, 1879. The gunboat *Sabrina* took us round to Portsmouth, and a rough passage we had, blowing hard the whole time. Arriving on board the *Vernon*, we soon settled down to our course of instruction, I taking great interest in what I was taught. At the end of a two month's course we were all examined, the whole of the class qualifying. I must have got through pretty well, as three other men and myself were kept behind when the class returned to Devonport, our duties being to attend on a special class of officers who were undergoing torpedo instruction.

The knowledge I gained while attending on the officers during their course of instruction, assisted by the fact that it was part of my duty to look after the senior lecture-room after instruction, proved very useful to me in later years.

I returned to H.M.S. *Cambridge* on August 30th, after being nearly four months in the *Vernon*.

One Saturday, when going on shore for the week end, a serious accident happened to me, which nearly ended

in disaster. The launches which carry the men on shore are secured to a stage until full up, they then shove off and are rowed to the dockyard. On getting into the launch, I slipped and fell overboard. This caused a great commotion, men were trying to hook me up with boathooks, as the launches were rather high out of the water.

I must have stunned myself, as I have a faint recollection of coming up and striking my head under the launch, then going down again. I felt sore on the top of my head for a week afterwards! Reynolds, the Torpoint bumboat man, happened to be lying alongside just abaft the launches in his small boat, and when I came to the surface he managed to grab me and drag me into his boat.

I was unconscious, so was taken to the sickbay where everything was done to bring me around. After respiration had been restored, I remained unconscious for more than an hour; one of my messmates, "Jumper Collins," found my kit-bag and changed my clothing, hanging the wet clothes up to dry. As there was no fire in the after galley, he put my boots in the oven to dry as there was a certain amount of heat there. The next day, being Sunday, I was dressing for "Divisions" and asked "Jumper" for my boots. He looked at me with a start and said, "Burst a frog, I forgot, I put them in the oven to dry!" He brought them to me on a dish! they were burnt to a cinder; the cooks having lighted the galley fire in the morning, not knowing that the boots were in the oven. There is an old superstition that a child born with a caul over its face will never be drowned. I have been told that I was born with a caul, and I have had some very narrow escapes in my time!

Shortly after my dip overboard I was walking with a chum—whose home was in Plymouth—through Union Street. As we were strolling along, my chum, who had noticed a young girl about fifty yards ahead and walking

in the same direction, gave me a nudge with his elbow, saying, "Pat, that is Carrie Riley just ahead." I replied, "Go on!" He said, "I tell you it is!" He was referring to the little girl who caught hold of my arm when I was going on Christmas leave in the year 1872. As we had not seen each other since that time I said to my chum, "I wonder if she will remember me after so many years?" He said "We will try," so we increased our pace to thirty-three inches—the step-out pace—which soon brought us alongside; we then reduced our pace to twenty-one inches—the step short pace. She naturally looked surprised to find a sailor on each beam; I taking the outer berth. My chum, being well acquainted with Miss Riley and her family—strange that our surnames were the same—soon got into conversation, I listening and taking stock, and trying to recall her to my mind. At last I chimed in, saying, "I don't suppose you remember me, Miss Riley." She turned her eyes full on me, weighing me up; then a spark of affinity must have passed between us. She smiled and said, "Yes, I do; you are Patsy Riley." We shook hands, laughingly recalling the incident on Millbay Pier. This casual meeting led to many others, eventually terminating in our marriage. A few months after we were married, I was drafted to H.M.S. *Defence*, a full rigged ship, stationed in the River Mersey as guard ship.

I was naturally sorry to leave my wife so soon, yet was glad to get away from the *Cambridge*, where there was no chance of improving my prospects, for now that I was married I had an even greater incentive to do so. On parting from my wife, I said to her, "Cheer up, Carrie, I can only do what all sailors have to do, 'Love you and leave you.'"

CHAPTER XXIV

H.M.S. *Defence*, 1881 & 1882

I JOINED H.M.S. *Defence*, stationed at Rockferry, near Liverpool, on December 15th, 1880. As H.M.S. *Defence* was a guard-ship, she only carried a reduced crew, and most of the mess tables were triced up overhead between the guns on the mess deck

The fact that so few men were on board gave me the chance I had been waiting for. When the hands fell in the next morning, I was selected, being the senior able seaman and a gunnery man, to take charge of the foretopmen, as the captain of that part of the ship was doing duty during the Christmas leave as coxswain of a large steam launch supplied to the ship for duty in the River Mersey, where the tides are very strong, making it difficult to use rowing boats during the winter.

This launch had to carry out the whole duty of plying between the ship and the shore; the coxswain and crew sleeping on board her with steam raised, ready for any emergency. This fact left me in full charge of my part of the ship, and I made the most of it.

When Christmas leave was over and the captain of my top had taken charge, it came to my knowledge that there was a vacancy for a leading seaman. I spoke to Jack Lamb, the captain of my part of the ship, about it, saying I should like to try to pass, so he said he would speak to the bo'sun about me.

H.M.S. Defence 2 9-Ton Guns 14 6½-Ton Guns
Guardship at Rockferry 1880-1882

Face page 196

H.M.S. " Defence "

The next day, at divisions, Commander C. R. Harris ordered me to fall out to be examined for leading seaman: first by the bo'sun. Fortunately I had already come under his notice, having done a few ticklish jobs to his satisfaction whilst in charge of the foretopmen.

Nevertheless, the bo'sun gave me a severe shaking up, keeping me under examination the whole day. The following forenoon I was examined by the first lieutenant, and in the afternoon by the navigating officer, passing the whole three successfully. The next day (Feb. 1st, 1881, which date is noted on my parchment certificate) I had to appear before Captain A. T. Thrupp to be rated leading seaman.

Commander Harris, who was in command of H.M.S. *Rocket* when I fell overboard at Montevideo, made me captain of the mizzentop, and coxswain of his gig. I had not done too badly for a youngster, and was feeling quite satisfied with myself at having gained my first step on the ladder just over six weeks from leaving the *Cambridge*. In those days, when a man passed for "leading seaman," it included the examination for all ratings except for warrant rank; it was, therefore, very stiff, but thanks to my early training in the *Amethyst* and to hard study, I was able to pass.

In my opinion, there is nothing that does more towards making a man a thorough seaman than for him to serve a commission in a corvette or small ship during his early days. He has a better opportunity of learning every branch of his job in a small ship than he can obtain in a big one.

A month later Captain C. T. Jago was appointed to the *Defence*, which left Rockferry shortly afterwards for Devonport for her annual refit. Arriving there, the Dockyard authorities took charge of her, giving her a thorough overhaul; dockyard workmen swarming over the ship, about their different jobs.

Memories of a Blue-jacket

While in charge of a party of men drawing stores from the dockyard, I met my old skipper, Captain A. J. Chatfield. He was the Captain of the Steam Reserve at Devonport, having charge of all ships under repair in the dockyard. I saluted him as I passed with my party, he recognised me as one of his old boys in the *Amethyst*, and called me over to him, kindly making inquiries as to what I had been doing since we paid off. He said he was pleased to see that I was getting on in the Service—I had badges on both arms. I managed to get a shake of the hand with Gus. Winter, his coxswain in the *Amethyst*, who was in attendance on his captain as usual.

During the time the ship was in the dockyard being overhauled hardly a day passed without some of the men requesting to see the commander for a day's leave, in addition to the usual night leave given every other night. All sorts of reasons were given as an excuse why they wanted the day.

One day, our armourer applied for a day's leave, which led to an amusing dialogue between him and the commander.

The armourer's name was Woolridge, and his wife and family lived in a small village called Hooe, which was situated the other side of Cattdown, Plymouth.

There happened to be two villages of the same name, Higher Hooe and Lower Hooe. Woolridge wanted a day's leave to change houses from one village to the other.

The commander asked the usual question as to why he wanted the day's leave, and Woolridge replied that he wanted to change houses.

The commander asked him where he lived. Woolridge replied, "Hooe, sir." The commander, thinking the man did not understand his question, repeated it. Woolridge again replied, "Hooe, sir." Commander Harris gave the man a pitying look, said, "You, sir."

On Woolridge again replying, "Hooe, sir," the commander stamped his foot and said, "You! you ——— fool, who do you think I am speaking to?" Turning to the master-at-arms, he said, "Find out what that fool wants." Woolridge explained that he wanted to change houses in the village of Hooe. It took a good deal to ruffle Commander Harris, but he got into a breeze on this occasion, though when it was explained to him, he at once granted Woolridge his day's leave.

This incident caused many a laugh; no doubt it remained a chestnut in the West Country for many a day.

The ship, having been thoroughly overhauled, was towed to Plymouth Sound, where we embarked our complement of coastguards for their summer training, their chief officers performing the duties of midshipmen of the watch.

Being captain of the mizzen-top, I was supplied with fourteen coastguards to complete my part of the ship. Most of them were old enough to be my father, but we got on very well during the cruise, and I learned many useful wrinkles from them.

H.M.S. *Defence* sailed for Spithead on June 16th 1881, to join the Reserve Squadron of eight ships H.M.S. *Hercules* was flagship of Rear-Admiral H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh, afterwards Prince of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, who was Commander-in-Chief; the other ships were H.M.S. *Hector*, *Defence*, *Lord Warden*, *Valiant*, *Warrior*, *Repulse*, and *Penelope*. The whole of these were fitted with masts and yards as well as steam, and probably it was the last time a Fleet of this description sailed together for a long cruise. Steam was gradually taking the place of sails.

The squadron sailed for the Downs, arriving there under sail in two lines, and left again shortly afterwards for Heligoland. Anchoring on the south side of the island, it was found that the anchorage was not too safe,

so we left the same day. H.M.S. *Repulse* ran ashore on leaving, and had to be towed off by H.M.S. *Hercules*, who went to her assistance.

Still cruising under sail, the squadron arrived at Copenhagen on June 1st; the Commander-in-Chief and officers of the Fleet attending several social functions on shore. The squadron left Copenhagen four days later for Kronstadt, the trip being enlivened by plenty of drill aloft. At 10 a.m. on June 28th one of our men fell overboard; the ship, at once hauling out of the line, lowered a cutter and picked the man up, quite a smart evolution. The same afternoon a man was seen to fall overboard from the ship ahead of us—H.M.S. *Warrior*—and we again lowered a cutter and picked him up.

Four days later, at 11 a.m., a Russian cruiser joined the squadron, saluting the flag with seventeen guns. We arrived at Kronstadt the same afternoon, anchoring in two lines. While lying there, the officers embraced every opportunity of visiting St. Petersburg—now known as Leningrad. I was told by some of the chief officers who visited the city that it was a most beautiful place, and contained many magnificent buildings.

One morning, a week later, the Russian Emperor came out in his yacht to visit the Fleet; all ships manned yards, firing a Royal Salute of twenty-one guns as the yacht passed through the lines. The Emperor then went on board H.M.S. *Hercules* to lunch with the Duke.

In the afternoon the Emperor returned to his yacht, the ships again manning yards. The squadron then weighed anchor and sailed for Kiel. Early next morning we ran into a heavy fog which completely obscured the other ships. We closed water-tight doors, and each ship lowered and towed astern a fog-buoy, this being fitted with a bell which was set ringing by the action of the water on a small propeller. Speed was reduced to five

knots, the flagship firing signal guns every half-hour. It was a most anxious time till the fog cleared.

When it lifted, H.M.S. *Valiant* was four miles astern, most of the other ships also being out of station. The flagship waited until all had got into station again and then proceeded to Kiel, arriving there July 14th, each ship being secured to a mooring buoy inside the harbour. The flagship saluted the German flag with twenty-one guns, the German returning the salute.

The next day special leave was granted to the men until 11.30 p.m. I had a run ashore, and what struck me most was the number of beer gardens and dancing saloons in Kiel and in the country around; also the number of shops showing amber ornaments for sale.

While lying there, the Germans sent an invitation to all ships, for one man of each rating in every branch, to attend dinner at their Naval Barracks in honour of the Fleet. More than one hundred men landed.

After we had been at Kiel four days the Squadron slipped the buoys and steamed out of harbour in single line ahead, accompanied by the German Fleet. We had not gone far before H.M.S. *Hector* had to haul out of the line on account of heated bearings. The German squadron parted company, our squadron steaming through the Great Belt and anchoring off the Skaw Lighthouse, where the *Hector* rejoined the Fleet. The next day the squadron sailed for Leith Roads, and steaming around Skaw Point—Denmark—we made sail. As the breeze freshened a reef was taken in the topsails; but two days later we encountered a very heavy gale in the North Sea, so we took another reef in the topsails and also reefed the courses.

During the first watch, i.e., 8 to 12 midnight, the gale increased in force, and the watch on deck had to furl the lower sails. It was blowing great guns, with a blinding rain, and was as black as a coal bag. All hands

of the forepart of the ship were on the foreyard, while those of the afterpart were on the mainyard. We were aloft on the yards, struggling to gather in the sails, from 11.15 p.m. until 12.30 a.m., using small tackles or jiggers passed down from the tops to bouse the sail up, then securing it to the yard by sea gaskets. The canvas being wet it was like a board, the edges of the folds of the canvas cutting like a knife and tearing the skin on the backs of our fingers as we grabbed the sails.

It was a recognised rule in the Navy in the old sailing ship days that when a watch started reefing or furling a sail they were to finish it before coming down from aloft. Our watch went below that night wet through at 12.35 a.m. and turned out again at 4 a.m. The gale continued for forty-eight hours, and then eased down; we were glad when the ships anchored in Leith Roads.

The squadron only remained there one day, and then proceeded to the Isle of Wight. We steamed out of the Firth of Forth into the North Sea, passing through a fishing fleet during the night; there were hundreds of lights scattered about of boats riding to their trawls. It is quite possible we may have damaged some of their gear.

The squadron anchored off Osborne on July 29th. His Royal Highness landing to pay his respects and to report to his Queen Mother, who was in residence at Osborne. The Fleet then left for Spithead.

On August 1st the squadron dispersed to their respective ports, thereby ending a most interesting cruise. Arriving at Devonport, we discharged our coastguards, who were delighted at the prospect of returning to their own little homes after the strenuous times they had experienced. I was sorry to part with some of them they had acted like fathers towards me although I was their boss.

The ship remained at Devonport until August 23rd, then sailed for Holyhead, arriving there two days later. When I saw the breakwater, my thoughts went back to the time, eight years before, when His late Majesty, King Edward VII—then Prince of Wales—performed the opening ceremony, and when I, as a boy, manned yards as His Royal Highness passed along the breakwater in his carriage and pair. What wonderful things I had seen since then!

The *Defence* arrived at her station at Rockferry on August 29th. The next day the ship was thrown open to visitors; this being frequently done when the weather was fine, so as to allow the people of the industrial districts to see something of the Navy they had read about and had to help pay for.

Steamers loaded with people would come alongside in turns; the visitors swarming over the ship and enjoying themselves to their hearts' content, until the hooter of their steamer called them off. Another steamer would then discharge its load, and so it would go on until 5 p.m.

A week after our arrival at Rockferry we proceeded under steam and anchored off George's Landing Stage, Liverpool, for the opening ceremony of Langton Dock—a new dock which was being opened by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

Two days later the ship was decorated from stem to stern with flags. At 11.30 a.m. we manned yards and fired a Royal salute of twenty-one guns as the Prince of Wales passed the ship on his way to Langton Dock. The ship again fired a Royal salute at 12.10 p.m., when His Royal Highness opened the dock.

On September 12th we weighed anchor and proceeded to our moorings at Rockferry, firing a salute of twenty-one guns in honour of a visit from the King of the Sandwich Islands to England, he having arrived in the Mersey that day.

The *Defence* now settled down again to the winter routine of a guardship, receiving batches of coast-guards for fourteen days' gunnery drill, then sending them back to their respective stations by the revenue cutter attached to the ship for that duty.

We slipped our buoy and steamed down the Mersey on April 25th, 1882, for Plymouth. On May 1st we moored off Devonport for two weeks, when we went alongside the jetty.

Three weeks later, having completed my time in the *Defence*, I was discharged to H.M.S. *Cambridge*, appearing before Captain Alexander Buller the next day. Owing to the very strong recommendation sent with my papers by my late Captain, Charles Trelawny Jago, I was promoted to petty officer, 2nd class.

Readers will hardly credit it, but although I had been in charge of twenty-one men and a part of the ship, captain of an 8-inch gun, and coxswain of a boat as a leading seaman, it made no difference to my pension; I was still classed as an "able seaman" for pension. On being promoted petty officer, 2nd class, I was entitled to a half-penny a day pension, in addition to my service pension of one half-penny per day for each year I served.

During the time I was in the Service, chief and 1st class petty officers only received one penny per day extra to the Service pension for each year they served in that rank. The men of the Royal Navy, even to this day, receive less pension for their services to their king and country than do any other body of men serving the Crown.

After being promoted, I joined a class of twenty-two men who had to requalify for seamen gunners in order to make themselves acquainted with the improvements in naval gunnery brought about through its transition from muzzle to breech-loading guns.

At the end of the course we were examined, but I

was the only member of our class to be recommended to qualify for Instructor.

Finishing my forty days' school course, I started an eighty days' course in gunnery. When the time arrived for me to pass out I was examined by four different gunnery officers. Successfully passing the examination, I had to appear before the captain in September, 1883, to be rated 1st class petty officer and gunnery instructor. Unfortunately, we were not paid as instructors until we were drafted to a ship as such, unless we were put on the staff; though at present, I believe, a man draws the pay of instructor from the day he qualifies.

During the interval of waiting to be drafted I requalified in "torpedo" under a new scheme which had just been introduced by the Admiralty, and which combined the ratings of gunnery and torpedo in one; this was known as S.G.T., first or second class, i.e. seaman-gunner-torpedoman, with an increase of another penny per day for first class. I qualified in this the following June.

CHAPTER XXV

H.M.S. "BELLEISLE," JULY 1884–MARCH 1888

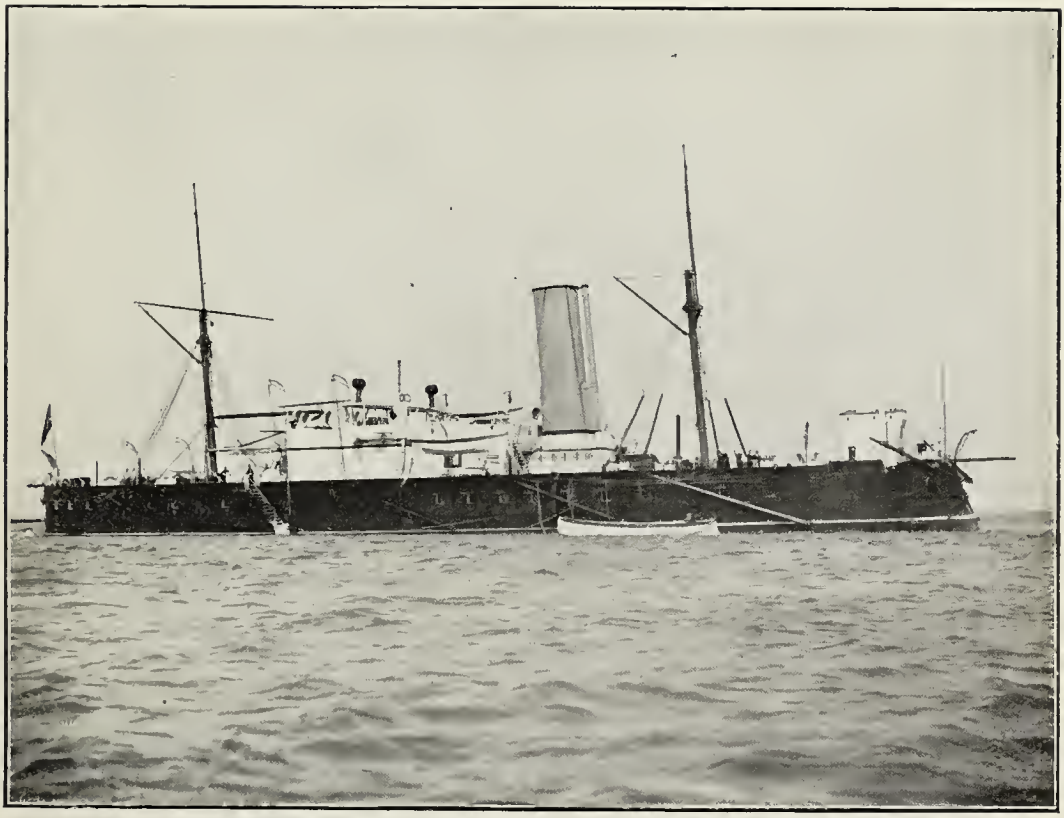
I WAS drafted to H.M.S. *Belleisle*, Captain Loftus F. Jones, in July, 1884. She was stationed at Kingstown, Co. Dublin, as guard-ship. The *Belleisle* was originally built for the Turkish Navy, but was purchased by Great Britain in 1878, being eventually used as a target for experimental purposes until she sank.

We arrived at Kingstown on August 7th, mooring ship inside the east breakwater. The harbour is formed by two breakwaters, each over a mile in length and built out from the shore, the ends curving towards each other, with a space between to form the entrance to the harbour and with a lighthouse on each to serve as a beacon.

A fast line of mail boats, named after the four provinces of Ireland, formed a connecting link between Holyhead and Kingstown. Steaming through the entrance, they made their way to piers or jetties on the east side and close to the railway to Dublin.

As guardship, the *Belleisle* hoisted the Royal Standard and fired a salute of twenty-one guns whenever the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland travelled by the mailboats, during his frequent visits to London.

An old man, Davie Stephens by name, had a newspaper stall on a site just outside the railway station. He was well known to all Lord Lieutenants and regular passengers by the boats, and they would generally exchange a few words with him as he handed them the



H.M.S. Belleisle 4.25-Ton Guns
Guardship at Kingstown, Ireland, 1884-1888

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morning papers on their way to the train. Having been there for so many years, he knew and addressed them by their titles or names.

The *Belleisle* had a very large "district," with more than a thousand officers and men on her books, stationed along the north and east coasts from Donegal to Waterford. They were divided into two parts for training. One half embarked in the *Belleisle* during the winter months for fourteen days' gunnery, arriving on board in batches of sixty; the other half embarked for six weeks' summer training in the Reserve Fleet.

It was customary for the *Belleisle* to spend two months of the year in the northern part of Ireland, one month in Belfast Lough, off Carrickfergus; the other off Moville, in Lough Foyle. The White Star liners called at Moville on their way to America to embark any emigrants who had decided to leave the Old Country from that part of Ireland.

Strange to say, the *Belleisle*, while lying at these ports, was never thrown open to visitors; but at Carrickfergus, whenever it was fine, a party of young ladies used to row off to the ship and secure their boat to our boom; they would then settle down and sing to us some fine old ballads and Irish melodies, which we thoroughly enjoyed. Their voices sounded sweet in the autumn twilight.

Having visited both ports, we returned to Kingstown for the winter to carry out the routine of a guardship, and for drilling coastguards. A party of men were warned for duty every evening in case of fire on shore, a gun-cotton charge, battery and length of wire always being kept ready. My first thrill in the *Belleisle* occurred just after our arrival from the north. About 7.30 one evening, a fire was reported on shore. The gunner and I, with a party of men, landed with our gear; we saw that the fire was over by the Harbour Board's depôt, among the trawlers and other fishing boats. One of the

trawlers had caught fire, and the flames were sending sparks high into the air, to the danger of the other boats.

By the time we arrived on the scene, crowds of people had gathered. We decided to try and sink her as soon as possible, so I said to Mr. Shepperd, the gunner, "I'll take a couple of hands in a boat lying alongside the steps and secure the charge to her." I ran over to the man who had charge of the battery, and said, "Don't connect up until you hear from me." Jumping into the boat we were soon alongside the trawler; the charge being lowered over the quay, I caught the spunyarn by which it was slung, and lowered it into the water. Taking one end of the spunyarn and passing it around the bows I jumped on board and secured my end to the forerigging, telling the men in the boat to haul their end taut so as to get the charge under the trawler, and then to secure it. We had to be sharp about it, as the flames were lapping the mast and rigging. When we had finished, we rowed back to the steps. I ran over to the man with the battery and told him to make the connection and press the key. When the charge exploded, it made a large hole in the trawler, causing her to settle down under water, thereby preventing damage to the other boats.

On November 1st, 1884, Commander G. R. Bromley was superseded by Commander John E Blaxland; a change which benefited both ship's company and coastguards.

Kingstown offered many attractions for spending an enjoyable afternoon or evening ashore. There were many country walks leading from the town, my favourite walk being to Dalkley, then up on Killiney Hill. Magnificent views could be had from different parts of the hill. On one side was Killiney Bay with its long stretch of sandy beach, having Bray Head and the Wicklow Mountains in the distance. Another grand view was obtained by looking across Dublin Bay; with the sun playing on the Hill of Howth and Ireland's Eye, and the passing

steamers making their way to the Liffey, there was presented a magnificent picture for an artist to sketch.

I shall never forget my first trip to Dublin. One Sunday afternoon, the Captain's coxswain said, "Pat, what about a run up to Dublin? I will show you round." It being a fine day, and as I was anxious to see the city, I said, "All right, I'll go." We were soon ashore, and making for the railway station, where we took return tickets and settled down in a compartment with a few others.

There are five stations between Kingstown and Westland Row, Dublin, a distance of seven miles, and on Sundays the trains stop at each one. At the first station three or four others got in with us, among whom was a boy about twelve years of age who sat on the seat opposite me.

To see that boy with his innocent-looking face, you would have thought he was a cherub dropped down from aloft. The train had barely left the station when he burst into song. With a loud but pleasing voice he sang, what was apparently, at that time, a popular song of "Mr. Riley, who keeps the Hotel." When he came to the chorus, he pointed his finger at me, at the same time, singing:

" Are you Mr. Riley who keeps the Hotel?
If you are Mr. Riley
They speak of so highly,
Bedad, Mr. Riley, you are looking quite well."

I think I blushed, I was so taken aback; and my chum roared with laughter. When the young urchin handed around his cap to collect coppers, ready to jump out at the next station and get into another compartment, I could do no other than put a few pence in his cap. I had time to ask him who had told him that I was called Riley; he smiled and said, "No one, sir." I afterwards found out that it was a common

practice on Sunday afternoons for all sorts of musicians and singers to work the trains from station to station: they don't mind that sort of thing in Ireland.

We spent the afternoon in seeing the sights of the city, and then made our way to Phœnix Park, known the world over for its immense size. We had a ride through it on a jaunting car.

On April 6th, 1885, H.M.S. *Belleisle* hoisted and saluted the flag of Rear-Admiral H. D. Hickley, the Senior Naval Officer on the Coast of Ireland. The same evening the Channel Squadron of six ships hove in sight, coming to anchor outside the breakwater. H.M.S. *Minotaur*, flagship of Vice-Admiral de Horsey, H.M.S. *Agincourt*, *Achilles*, *Sultan*, *Northumberland* and *Neptune*. They were assembled off Kingstown in honour of a visit to Ireland of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales (the late King Edward VII), who was always very popular there.

The next day the *Belleisle* exchanged captains with H.M.S. *Neptune*, Captain Guy O. Twiss taking over the *Belleisle* from Captain Jones. This proved another change for the better. The following day, the Fleet manned yards and fired a salute of twenty-one guns as the Royal Yacht *Osborne*, with His Royal Highness on board, passed through their lines and entered the harbour. The *Belleisle* manned ship and fired a Royal Salute as the Prince landed, amidst crowds of cheering people, who were always delighted whenever any member of the Royal Family visited the Emerald Isle. I have often wondered why more frequent visits are not made to that beautiful country.

Having received addresses of welcome from the local authorities and other public bodies, the Prince proceeded to Dublin by train; then, on his tour through Ireland, travelling from Bantry to Killarney by that most beautiful route now known to tourists all the world over, as the Prince's Drive.

H.M.S. " Belleisle "

The Fleet left Kingstown three days later for a cruise down south. Admiral Hickley's flag was hauled down the same day. The Fleet returned, accompanied by the Yachts *Osborne* and *Enchantress* on April 20th, sailing again for Belfast in order to be present when the Prince of Wales embarked after his tour through Ireland.

After the Fleet had sailed, we carried out our quarterly torpedo practice of creeping and sweeping for supposed enemy mines. The torpedo-men also carried out a night attack with outrigger torpedoes on a supposed enemy ship at anchor. The only time I remember it being attempted in actual practice was when H.M.S. *Shah* sent a boat fitted with an outrigger charge to blow up the Peruvian ship *Huascar*.

The practice was carried out from a steam pinnace, having a long pole on each side of her, passing through two rollers fixed to the boat's side; the after roller has a long arm which rises to an upright position on hauling on the tackles secured to the heel of the pole. A charge of two 16¼-lb. tins of wet guncotton, with a primer of dry, are secured on the outer ends of the pole, wires from the primer being led to an electric battery. On approaching the object, the poles are hauled out by tackles until the inner arm is upright, which submerges the charge. When this has made contact with the vessel, the engines of the pinnace are reversed full speed astern, the key is pressed, and the explosion takes place. When at practice, and after being rigged out, it is advisable to get as far under the hood of the boat as possible before pressing the key, otherwise one will be thoroughly drenched. The first sensation one feels after the charge has exploded, is a sudden lifting of the bows, then down they come, flop! The next, is a downpour of water which has been sent into the air by the explosion. Outrigger torpedo work has been abolished in the Navy for many years.

CHAPTER XXVI

LAYING A MINEFIELD IN BANTRY BAY

We sailed for Devonport for our annual overhaul, returning to Kingstown on June 19th, 1885. The yacht club's two day's regatta, held at Kingstown, was one of the most popular events of the year; some splendid yachts taking part in the racing. I remember the *Irex*, *Tara* and other cracks of their day, looking a picture as they sailed by our ship, which was dressed with flags for the occasion. It was a big social function for yachtsmen and their friends in Co. Dublin. Our next move was to the northern ports, arriving at Carrickfergus on September 17th, but we got under way again the next day for the purpose of running Whitehead torpedoes. Unfortunately, while carrying out the practice, our dinghy, which was employed in picking up the torpedoes after they had been fired and bringing them alongside, got swamped and an A.B., William Richards, who was in the boat, was drowned. We sent creeping parties away, but failed to find his body.

After visiting Moville, the ship returned to Kingstown for the winter, sailing to Devonport to refit on April 16th, 1886, then joining the Reserve Fleet, Vice-Admiral J. K. E. Baird, assembled at Portland on June 11th. We having been without a gunnery officer for several months, Lieutenant H. G. Monckton was appointed before the Fleet sailed for Berehaven, Bantry Bay, where it was intended to lay a minefield. The torpedo-men of the Fleet were busy fitting electro-

contact and boats' mines, also torpedo booms as a protection against boat attack. Each ship had to fit and lay down six contact mines in series, the main cable being brought to a large junction box, buoyed off the shore ; each ship's cable was connected to a cable led on shore, where an ingenious plan was adopted to let us know when a mine was exploded, also the ship to whom it belonged.

Each ship erected two poles on shore, with a line across like goal posts. Discs of dry guncotton, with detonators, were secured to the line about a yard apart, one for each mine laid out, a lead wire being then connected to the main cable. Each ship fitted six boat-mines. On the night of June 26th torpedo boats made an attack on the Fleet, the latter being protected by their torpedo nets, and the Fleet firing blank charges in repelling the attack.

At 9 a.m. the *Belleisle* topped her torpedo booms in preparation for steaming through the minefield. Lieutenant Monckton, two hands and myself landed in the dinghy to see the results of our handiwork. Officers and men from other ships were there for the same purpose.

At half-past ten the *Belleisle* slipped her buoy and steamed full speed in a zig-zag course through the minefield; as she bumped a mine it would explode the guncotton disc on shore with a loud bang! The officers and men on shore were watching their discs with keen interest, waiting for them to explode as the old *Belleisle* ploughed her way through the minefield. Two out of six of our discs exploded; she was like a mother, she knew her own!

We parted company with the Fleet, and anchored off the town of Bantry, remaining there a few days; we then went on a cruise, visiting Queenstown, Kingstown, Carrickfergus, and Milford Haven. At the last-named port an accident occurred which might have had very

serious results; fortunately, the ship escaped without damage, but the mishap gave us plenty of hard work.

Early in the morning we had slipped from our buoy off Pembroke Dockyard and were steaming out of the harbour, when the pin of the steering gear worked loose. The ship at once got out of control and ran upon the mud flats.

The navigator went away in the dinghy to take soundings; our stream anchor was laid out and the cable brought to the capstan on which we were all heaving, with the engines going full speed astern; but she was firmly embedded in the mud, and would not budge. The captain signalled to the dockyard to send two lighters at once; and the tug *Stormcock* soon got under way with two large ones which we secured alongside the *Belleisle*. The *Stormcock* had to clear away again at once to avoid being caught on the mud, as the tide was falling fast. All hands were employed in clearing the shell-rooms, and by twelve noon, fifty nine tons of 12-inch shells had been hoisted into the lighters. Parties of men were also engaged in clearing the quick-firing gun and small arm magazines. Everything movable of any weight was hoisted into the lighter by 5.35 p.m.

During the dinner hour, when we had a spell, the ship was high and dry, with nothing but mud for hundreds of yards around. It was said that the rise and fall of tide at Milford Haven was the highest along the coast. It must have been an anxious time for the captain until the tide commenced to flow; for his ship—a heavy mass of iron, with four 25-ton guns and a massive armoured battery—was resting on the mud without supports. It would have been a serious case if the *Belleisle* had heeled over on to her side.

At 6.30, high-water, the *Stormcock* came off and passed her towing hawsers on board, and, assisted by the ship's engines, towed her into deep water, where we dropped anchor. The *Stormcock* then cast off and

brought the lighters alongside; then it was a case of all hands clearing the lighters and stowing the shell and ammunition away until 8 p.m., after which, working by watches, we kept at it all night, finishing at 9 a.m. on Monday; quite a lively week-end. It was hard work, especially for the gunnery staff; we were at it practically the whole time, the gunnery lieutenant being anxious to get everything stowed away before the ship proceeded to sea. The *Belleisle* left at 2.30 the same day, nothing the worse for her mud bath, and joined the Fleet on July 21st at Spithead.

The Reserve Fleet, under the Command of Vice-Admiral J. K. E. Baird, moored in Stokes Bay and dressed ship at 12 noon. At 3 p.m. H.M.S. *Orontes*, a troopship with colonial visitors on board, steamed down the lines to see the Fleet. A little later, Her Majesty Queen Victoria, in the Royal Yacht *Alberta* came out from Cowes, followed by the *Victoria and Albert*, to inspect the Fleet. H.M.S. *Belleisle* was sent to Cowes to act as guardship during the Royal Regatta, the other ships of the Fleet leaving for their respective stations.

Sailing for Plymouth, where we remained a few days, the *Belleisle* proceeded to Kingstown, arriving on August 12th. She left again for our annual trip up North, returning to Kingstown on October 27th.

The next day our gunnery lieutenant, H. G. Monckton, being appointed to another ship, left the *Belleisle*, having served only four months in her.

On November 1st, Commander George N. A. Pollard was appointed to succeed Commander J. E. Blaxland, who had been our commander for two years. We were all very sorry to lose him, for he was popular with the ship's company, being one of those officers who studied the welfare of the men without allowing any slackness on their part.

About this time, the military authorities stationed in Dublin had decided to hold a tournament at Balls

Bridge, near Dublin, where the Royal Horse Show is held every year. The officials appointed as a committee wrote to our captain, inviting him to send a contingent of blue-jackets from the *Belleisle* to compete with our field gun, or tug-of-war, or to enter for any other event we might wish.

Commander Pollard sent for me as the senior instructor, and said it was the captain's wish that the *Belleisle* should take part in the tournament, and instructed me to get a team together and commence practice as soon as possible, saying he would grant me every facility. I submitted a list of twenty names for his approval, as it was arranged that we should remain away from the ship for a week.

I landed our gun and limber that afternoon, taking with us rope for the tug-of-war practice, and single sticks and helmets for fencing, leaving them on shore at our depôt until required. We landed every evening for three weeks, practising first at gun drill, then tug-of-war and fencing, until the team was able to move together like clockwork.

On the day of the tournament we left the ship after dinner, Commander Pollard kindly giving me half a sovereign to treat the men to a drink on the road, Balls Bridge being nearly seven miles from Kingstown. Landing at the depôt we soon had the gun and limber out with drag-ropes on; I gave the order, "Form the order, march!" viz., "man the drag-ropes," then, "Quick march!" We moved off at a swinging pace through the town and on to Blackrock; arriving at a quiet little pub I gave the order, "Halt!" and treated them to a drink, as suggested by the commander. After their pint of Guinness, I started them off again, arriving at Balls Bridge at 3.30 p.m., completing the journey in one hour and twenty minutes; which was very good time, dragging an 8-cwt gun and limber over the road.

Laying a Mine Field

I found a berth for the gun, telling the No. 1 to give her a rub up; I then reported myself to the military officer in charge, who told me about the arrangements which had been made for the men's food and sleeping accommodation for the week. I, with the three petty officers I had in the team, found my way to the sergeants' mess, having been informed by an officer that our tug-of-war team would be required to compete about 8 p.m., and the field gun's crew later on.

The tournament was held in a large building provided with seating accommodation for about five thousand people. The large arena was covered with sawdust, making the ground soft to run about on.

Being a hefty chap, I formed one of our tug-of-war team. We were pitted against one of the regiments in the garrison, and managed to win our heat. The next night, we found ourselves up against the Munster Fusiliers, but after a very hard struggle, we won; this success carrying us into the semi-final, when we had to pull against the Grenadier Guards—great big fellows who came over from London to compete. Not unexpectedly, we lost, getting the third prize.

At 10 p.m. I was informed that it was time for the field gun performance, this proving the tit-bit of the evening. I brought the gun and limber into the arena at the double: eighteen fine, strapping blue-jackets dragging their gun and limber, looked a picture of health and strength.

Standing well away from the gun I gave my orders in a loud, clear voice, "Halt," "Action front." The gun was unlimbered and pointed in the direction named, the limber, moving at the double, taking up its position in rear.

I then put them through the movements of shifting gun wheels, dismounting the gun, remounting and opening fire; using long, quill tubes giving a loud report. Dismounting and retiring with the gear;

leaving the spiked gun on the ground they rushed to the end of the arena; at the order, "Remount," they doubled back to the gun, assembled the parts, remounted the gun and then opened fire. On completing each evolution I doubled them round the arena. The smartness of the men brought forth round after round of applause from the spectators on the completion of every evolution; so much so, that after the performance the Committee sent for me, and said they intended to award my men the three prizes for the field gun competition on condition that we gave a performance each evening that the Show was on. I spoke to the men, who agreed. I suppose the military authorities saw that it was impossible for the Artillery to compete against us.

After the first evening, the reputation of the *Belleisle's* men spread far and wide, bringing crowded houses every night. I am not saying that the military did not do their share; they put up some splendid performances —(one of them beat me for first prize in fencing)— but of a different class from ours, which people so seldom see.

On the Thursday evening, Captain Guy O. Twiss came to see the show. He sent for me, asking how we were getting on; I told him we were getting on splendidly.

The news soon spread around that the skipper was present, which put the men on their mettle.

The General commanding the Forces in Ireland, Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, attended the same night. As we came in at the double I glanced around to find the captain; I soon found him, sitting with Mrs. Twiss in the fifth row behind Prince Edward.

Performing a few preliminary movements, and firing a few rounds, I gave the order, "Cease fire." The men then stood to attention, waiting for the next order: facing the captain I gave the order, "Dismount."

Laying a Mine Field

In a few seconds the gun was on the ground, wheels off both carriage and limber and the men sitting on the separated parts perfectly still, looking like figures carved in wood. The effect on the spectators was wonderful. They all stood up as one person waving their hats and handkerchiefs and cheering for several minutes. I can assure you it did my heart good to see our captain, carried away by the enthusiasm of those around him, jumping to his feet and waving and cheering with the others. It was a proud moment for me. I am sure he also felt proud of his men. I returned the gun to the depôt at Kingstown on Sunday at 11 a.m., all the soldiers in camp turning out to cheer us off. Our fellows made themselves very popular while at Balls Bridge.

CHAPTER XXVII

1887, QUEEN VICTORIA'S JUBILEE AND A TRIP TO STORNAWAY

THE *Belleisle* refitted at Chatham in the early part of 1887, returning to Kingstown on May 16th. I think it was a fortnight after our arrival that during a breeze of wind a trawler was wrecked outside the west breakwater, the crew being rescued by clambering, with the assistance of lifelines, on to the breakwater. The Harbour Board asked our captain to send a party to blow her up, so Lieutenant the Hon W. G. Stopford, who had joined the ship on February 2nd as gunnery lieutenant, went away with the party. We had great difficulty in getting close to her, as it was blowing rather fresh at the time, but after a lot of trouble and a thorough wetting, we managed to destroy her.

On June 6th we dressed ship, and at noon, manned ship and rigging, firing a Royal salute of fifty guns; we then fired a *feu-de-joie*, and gave three cheers in honour of Her Majesty Queen Victoria's Jubilee.

A week later, at 4.10 p.m., we dressed ship and fired a Royal salute of twenty-one guns on the arrival of the H.M.S. *Ireland* with T.R.H. Prince Albert Victor and Prince George of Wales (now His Majesty King George V) on board. We manned ship and cheered lustily as the Royal Princes steamed by. Landing on Kingstown Pier, they received an address of welcome from the local authorities and proceeded by train to Dublin, accompanied by the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.

Queen Victoria's Jubilee

On July 28th we dressed ship and fired another salute of fifty guns in honour of Her Majesty's Coronation.

On June 30th, Killiney Hill was dedicated to the public for use as a Park, the opening ceremony being performed by T.R.H. Prince Albert Victor and Prince George of Wales. It was to be known as Victoria Park as a memorial of Her Majesty's Jubilee.

A tablet with the Royal Princes' names and the date of the opening ceremony has been fixed and is still on the Memorial Stone, erected on the highest part of the hill. The *Belleisle* fired a Royal Salute of twenty-one guns and cheered the Princes as they left Kingstown at 7.15 p.m. on board H.M.S. *Ireland.*

We sailed from Kingstown to join the Reserve Fleet under the Command of Vice-Admiral John K. E. Baird at Portland leaving the next day for Torbay but returning to Portland on July 14th, where we found the Channel Fleet under the Command of Rear-Admiral the Hon E. R. Freemantle, and the Training Squadron under the Command of Commodore A. H. Markham. The combined Fleet sailed for Spithead on July 18th, arriving there the same night, at 9 o'clock.

Our carpenters were employed in making a V.R. with deal planks; the arms of the V and the upright part of the R were twelve feet long by eleven inches wide; the other parts of the letter R being made in proportion.

A steamboat from the dockyard came around the Fleet, supplying each ship with fireworks for the illuminations. We were supplied with two hampers of electric globes for our V.R., they were connected to a circuit nailed to the boards, each lamp being placed twelve inches apart in series.

On account of the *Belleisle* not being fitted with searchlights, H.M.S. *Slaney*, a gunboat, came alongside on Friday evening to test our circuit with the electric current from her dynamo. It stood the test, and our V.R. looked very effective when hoisted up on a clear

space over our battery. The *Slaney* cast off at 7.30 to return again the following evening.

On Saturday, July 23rd, the Fleet dressed ship at 8 a.m. with flags arranged rainbow fashion, which made a fine display of bunting. At 3.55 p.m. the whole Fleet fired a Royal salute as Her Majesty came out in her Royal Yacht. Soon after the men of the Fleet manned yards and rigging to cheer Her Majesty as the yacht steamed through the lines to inspect the Fleet.

At 7.35 the Fleet fired a Royal salute and undressed ship. Lieutenant Stopford and the gunnery staff had been busy getting the fireworks ready for issue and instructing the men how to ignite the different lights. As the signal rockets had to be fired in groups of twenty-five, we made a shallow wooden trough with the groove lined with tin. It was long enough to rest the base of the rockets on when supported by two pairs of steps, and high enough for the rocket sticks to rest on the deck.

At 8 p.m. a general signal was made by the Admiralty to the Commanding Officer, "Convey to officers and men under your command Her Majesty's great pleasure and pride at the magnificent display made by Her Navy this afternoon."

Two hours later the Fleet was illuminated, the electric current switched on to the V.R.'s and on to a line of blue lights stretched from stem to stern. Rockets were fired at intervals, and before firing each group a trail of loose, fine grain powder was run along the trough, under the bases of the rockets, this being set fire to by a port fire at each end, ensuring their ascending together.

After a round of blue lights, Roman candles were ignited, sending their coloured balls high in the air; it must have been a pretty sight from the shore while they were burning. A rather amusing incident happened to the men of the gunboat *Slaney*. They had gone aloft to get a good view of the illuminations, but

directly the Roman candles were ignited they found themselves bombarded with coloured balls; they gave a yell, and were down from aloft in quick time!

The next day I was busy disconnecting the electric globes from the circuit on the V.R., packing them away in the hampers ready to return, and when the steamboat came alongside they were passed into her. After she had shoved off I found that two of the globes had been left behind. I kept them as a souvenir, and I still have one of them; the other is broken. I wonder whether there are any others about. They would appear antiquated to an electrician to-day, with their two little platinum loops to connect to the circuit. They required careful handling.

On Monday, July 25th, the Fleet weighed anchor and proceeded down channel. The *Belleisle* parted company off Falmouth, and engaging a pilot we anchored in the harbour, where ten torpedo boats and the gunboats *Sabrina* and *Tay*, as escorts, joined us the following day.

Four days later we joined the Fleet in Bantry Bay. The Fleet had been divided into two Divisions; one section was detailed for defending the coast, the other section for attacking.

After manoeuvres our section proceeded to Portland, where it was arranged to carry out a grand torpedo boat attack on the Fleet at anchor. The torpedo-men of the Fleet were employed in fitting and laying down boats' mines to stretch across the entrance to the harbour. I put some Roman candles in our mines so as to distinguish them from the others.

At 9.30 p.m. on August 8th, the attack was made by torpedo boats, accompanied by the gunboat *Rattlesnake*. The Fleet, using their searchlights and firing blank charges, lay with nets down for protection. I told Lieutenant Stopford what I had put in our mines. He laughed as he saw the coloured balls of the candles

bobbing up in the darkness. At 10.55 p.m. the signal was made to cease fire.

The following day, after weighing mines, the Fleet dispersed to their respective stations. The *Belleisle* proceeded to Plymouth, then on to Queenstown, discharging the coastguards who had been up for their summer training. No doubt they carried away with them a budget of news for their wives and families, all about the wonderful illuminations at Spithead, the visit of Her Majesty, and her signal to the officers and men of the Fleet.

We returned to Kingstown on August 25th. On September 15th the *Belleisle* left Kingstown for our annual visit to the north of Ireland, and while lying at Carrickfergus we received several visits from our friends, the singers. It gave us great pleasure to listen to their sweet voices which passed many a pleasant evening for us.

Lieutenant Edward Harvey joined the ship on October 13th; he was the fourth gunnery lieutenant to be appointed to the *Belleisle* during my time in her.

We returned to Kingstown on October 28th. One very dark evening the H.M.S. *Connaught*, while entering the harbour, collided with and sunk a trawler just inside the entrance, the crew being rescued by boats. The Harbour Board applied to our captain to send a party of men to blow her up, and clear the fair-way, as soon as possible.

Lieutenant Harvey being on leave, Commander Pollard sent for me, telling me to carry on, and the Irish Harbour Board would supply a lighter for the diving gear. When the lighter was towed alongside I had the pump and gear hoisted on board, taking a few torpedo-men with me to fit the charges; the lighter was then moored close to the wreck and the diver went down, taking with him a hammer and some spike

nails. Standing on the bottom, he drove the nails into the hull, putting three on each side of her, about twelve feet apart.

Two Engineer officers from one of the barracks in Dublin wrote to the Commander asking for permission to go on board the lighter to watch the procedure. While the diver was down, the torpedo-men secured six 16¼-lb. tins of wet guncotton to a length of three-inch rope, placing the charges twelve feet apart so as to correspond with the nails in the hull. When the diver came up, we inserted into each large tin a 2¼lb. tin of dry guncotton filled with detonators, then secured the circuit to the rope.

When the diver was over the side he took the first charge down with him. I pointed out to the army officers that I had joined the charges up in series so as to make it easier for the diver, who secured his charge to the first nail, then walked along to the next, working around the wreck, we paying out and following his bubbles as he came around to the other side.

When the diver came up, my party, with the two officers, jumped into the jolly-boat and the lighter was towed clear. I connected a long length of wire to the circuit and rowed well away. You never know what may happen with a bit of loose wood.

I joined the circuit to a ten cell battery, then, seeing all clear, pressed the key exploding the charge of one hundred and eleven pounds of guncotton. Owing to the depth of water, there was very little report, but it caused the surface to swell up like a child's balloon as it is blown out, and forced a volume of water, in a circle of sixty feet, to ascend in the centre to a height of ten feet, before collapsing.

Immediately afterwards, the harbour was littered with fragments of wood, supplying the boatmen with a fine harvest for the winter. I was told that the Board of Irish Lights wished to make us a present for

our services, but it was against the Admiralty Regulations. We had the job of clearing the fair-way, and I received the sum of one shilling and threepence per day for being in charge!

For several months trouble had been brewing among the crofters in the Island of Lewis, and at the beginning of the year 1888 they started damaging property, with the result that the *Belleisle* received orders on January 12th to proceed to Stornoway. Calling at Holyhead, we embarked one officer and thirty-two Marine Artillerymen to uphold law and order. Anchoring off Lewis Castle, H.M.S. *Seahorse* joined us the following day, with another contingent of Marines. There was a lot of trouble on the island, but it gradually quietened down.

Leaving the Marines behind, the *Belleisle* sailed for Kingstown, arriving on Sunday morning, March 18th. As we were leaving again on the 21st, I embraced the opportunity for a run on shore to wish my many friends "good-bye," as I knew I should not return, my time in the ship having expired. I had a fine night of it among them all, and had a fat head in the morning!

Sailing for Devonport, we arrived on March 23rd, I being transferred to H.M.S. *Cambridge* a few days later. Wishing my messmates "good-bye," I carried my kitbag into the steam pinnace; Commander Pollard met me at the gangway, shook hands and wished me "good luck."

Captain Guy O. Twiss who was leaving the *Belleisle*, came into the pinnace to be taken to the dockyard, where he landed. He was a nice fatherly gentleman. I was then taken to the *Cambridge*, losing eightpence per day instructor's pay until drafted to another ship as gunnery instructor.

I was given forty days to re-qualify, and to learn all the improvements in the ever-changing science of naval gunnery which had taken place since I left the

Cambridge in July 1884. Having completed my course, I passed my two days' examination with plenty of marks to spare.

For the summer manœuvres of the year 1888, the Admiralty had decided to commission all the ships lying at the ports of Devonport, Portsmouth, and Chatham, mobilising their crews from depôts and gunnery schools.

During the last two weeks in June the men of the *Cambridge* were frequently exercised in falling in for mobilisation. The different ratings were detailed for their respective ships; spaces were chalked on the decks, with the names of the ships marked on them. When the bo'sun's mate piped hands to mobilise, the men rushed away for their bags and hammocks and fell in on their allotted spots, with the result that when the signal was made to mobilise, everything went off very smoothly.

I was drafted to H.M.S. *Serpent*, Commander the Hon. E. T. Needham, on July 5th, 1888; that ill-fated ship subsequently foundered in the Bay of Biscay, only three men being saved.

The *Serpent* was one of the small fast cruisers stationed in Lough Swilly. She appeared to me to be very cranky. When steaming hard her guns seemed to be too heavy for her, and the seas on striking her sponsons would break right over her. If you were in your hammock, there would be very little sleep for you. The vibration caused the hammock to bob up and down as if one were being carried by Chinese coolies in a sedan chair slung on long bamboo poles. I was not a bit surprised when I heard that she had gone down.

Arriving at Devonport, I returned to the *Cambridge* on August 28th, the next day being drafted to H.M.S. *Calypso*.

CHAPTER XXVIII

H.M.S. *Calypso*
Sept. 13th, 1888 to December 4th, 1890.

I JOINED H.M.S. *Calypso*, Captain John C. Burnell, at Sheerness, 6 p.m., on September 13th, 1888. She left the same evening for the Downs to join the training squadron.

When the ship was well under way, I went to see Mr. Lennon, the gunner, and on my way noticed a young midshipman perched up on the mainbits, hanging on to the forebrace to steady himself, and whistling away like a bird; I suppose he was sent up there for some minor offence he had committed.

Mr. Lennon gave me some information concerning the routine of the ship, and stated that the captain was very keen on physical drill in the morning for the midshipmen. When he mentioned physical drill I was taken aback, for I had never seen it done! I asked him if he had any details about it, or if he could tell me how it was carried out, but he merely shook his head and said that Tavener, my predecessor, had taken his pamphlets with him.

At that time, physical drill was not taught in the Navy as at present; it was considered that running aloft, especially in the training squadron, where midshipmen got plenty of it, was sufficient exercise.

It was part of my duty as Instructor to drill the midshipmen in gunnery at seven bells, i.e. 7-30 to 8 a.m.

H.M.S. "Calypso"

I was on the quarter deck before seven bells; presently ten midshipmen fell in for daily drill, most of them fine strapping young fellows who were just about to go to college for their next step as acting-sub-lieutenants.

The Captain was on the poop with his arms on the rail, looking down on us; I was in a dilemma, a real fix, and was wondering how to carry on, when I suddenly thought of the cutlass exercises! I opened them out as for cutlass drill, then turned them forward towards me and gave the following orders: "Physical drill by numbers, first practice—One, Two, Three, Four"; the midshipmen moving their arms at each order; while I, not having the faintest idea what they were going to do, was watching each motion closely, and when I thought they had completed the movements of the practice, I repeated the orders several times, then giving the order "Steady!" After a short spell I gave the order, "First practice, judging your own time, commence," when they started to perform the motions in quick time, working together by the leading file.

The captain left the poop and went below. Shortly afterwards I gave the order, "Steady!" The midshipmen were sweating, and so was I, but mine was a cold sweat! Fortunately I was soon able to get the details from the senior midshipman.

H.M.S. *Calypso* joined the squadron in the Downs, which comprised H.M.S. *Active*, flagship of Commodore Markham, *Volage* and *Rover*. We sailed for Copenhagen, calling at Helsingör. On our arrival at Copenhagen, the Danish Admiral came on board to pay a visit to our captain. The saluting party had been called, and guns loaded in case we had to fire a salute, the guns' crews fell out ready for a call, and the signalman had the Admiral's flag at the masthead ready to break it open when the first gun should be fired.

The Gunner, who gives the order to fire, said to me, "Riley, just go around and try the locks and see if they are all right." I went along the port guns, cocking the trigger of each lock, and coming forward on the starboard side; but by the time I got to the gun before the gangway, the Danish Admiral and his Staff were shaking hands with our captain and officers.

Seeing the No. 1 of the gun standing in the rear of his gun, I said to him, "I have been told to try all the locks." He saw me cock the lock and hook on the tube lanyard without saying a word. I pulled the trigger, and Bang! went the gun!

The captain and officers looked across the deck with astonishment. I let fly at Morgan, giving him a blow that knocked him sprawling on the cooks' hatch amidships, saying, "Why the——didn't you tell me the tube was in vent?" The signalman when he heard the gun fire, broke the flag, so that the Danish Admiral received a one-gun salute!

The next day I had to appear before the first lieutenant, Leslie C. Stuart, being reprimanded in pencil and having to pay elevenpence-halfpenny, half the cost of the powder charge and tube. Morgan, the captain of the gun, was severely reprimanded, also having to pay his half of the cost.

Leaving for Kiel, we arrived there September 28th. While lying there we lost a man overboard; the squadron being at sail drill, when the second captain of the fo'c'sle, whose name was Beauchamp, fell off the fore-yard, and, rolling down the fore-rigging, struck the fo'c'sle rail before falling over the side. Our gunnery lieutenant, William C. Pakenham (now Admiral Sir William Pakenham) was in charge of the fo'c'sle at the time, and saw the man fall overboard. Without a moment's hesitation, he ran over, climbed the rails and jumped in after him, but failed to reach him. I was on the mainyard at the time and saw it all, going

H.M.S. Calypso at Kiel, September 1888
Mending and furling sails

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out to the yardarm if by chance his body was visible from the height, but the poor fellow must have sunk like a stone.

The Germans, when they heard the news, sent off a diving party to search for the body, but after working from our port boom for several hours they gave it up.

After tea, the bo'sun, Mr. T. Mahony, who had been busy during the afternoon fitting a long line with two hundred hooks placed a yard apart and at varying lengths, said to me, "Riley, I have permission from the first lieutenant to take the cutter and jolly-boat and try to find the body by sweeping; will you take charge of the jolly-boat while I go in the cutter?"

When ready, we both shoved off, the bo'sun paying out his line pulled in line with the bows of the *Calypso*, while I dropped astern, having the cutter on my starboard hand. I hauled in my line as the bo'sun paid out until I came to a bunting mark which allowed for plenty of spare line between it and the first hook.

We started to pull very slowly away from the ship, keeping our distance from the bunting. After searching up and down several times, we tried circling around, and I suppose we had been at it for an hour when Mr. Mahony told me to pull in my line very slowly, and to close in on the cutter as I did so.

I was hauling in my line very gently, when I felt a check as if it had caught in something, so I continued to haul in very carefully, and when the first hook came to the surface it brought up the body of Beauchamp. The inner hook had caught in his trousers by the left knee; this leg was bent, but the other was straight; he must have been lying on his back with his left leg raised. As the body came to the surface, I caught hold of his clothes, and ordering the two men on the after thwart to toss in their oars, we lifted the body into the boat and returned to the ship.

Beauchamp was buried at Kiel the next day. The funeral party was under the command of Lieutenant Pakenham. The Germans sent a band and a representative to attend the funeral.

The squadron sailed away from Kiel, October 4th, for Karls-Krona, the Swedish naval base, remaining there a few days, and then set sail for England.

At Portland, we parted company, making our way to Sheerness, where we arrived on October 17th, after an uneventful voyage.

CHAPTER XXIX

CRUISE TO THE WEST INDIES

A GREAT many changes took place among the officers and crew of the *Calypso* while she was refitting for the winter cruise to the West Indies.

Captain Count F. C. Metaxa superseded Captain J. C. Burnell; another gunner and boatswain, Messrs. Webb and R. Gibbs were at the same time appointed in place of the two warrant officers of these ranks who had completed their term of service in the ship. Six of our senior mishipmen, on promotion to acting sub-lieutenants, were sent to college, being relieved by six others; and the whole of the men and boys—except the leading hands—who had completed their twelve months' training, were exchanged for another batch to be broken in.

H.M.S. *Calypso* sailed for the Downs under our new captain to join the squadron, which sailed for Barbadoes, November 23rd, 1888, calling at Madeira on the way, and spending Christmas Day at sea. Well do I remember the next day getting a small target made with a flag on a pole which was towed astern by a grass hawser. I had a party of men to mount and secure our 7-pounder gun aft on the poop, and when the ammunition was ready, I sent down for the midshipmen.

They had to fire away an accumulation of ammunition which should have been expended in previous quarters. The ship was only just moving through the water under sail, the hot sun pouring down on us. It took quite three hours to get rid of that ammunition.

The ship's company had ample time to form an opinion of our captain during our trip to Barbadoes and round the island. It was an awful trip for some of the officers and men—the Count being notorious throughout the Service for his severity—officers were frequently logged for neglect of duty, while petty officers lost good-conduct badges for the same fault.

I have found that every captain I have served under has certain peculiarities or fads. I soon discovered that the Count had his, and one of them was that he expected his petty officers to know the name of every man and boy in his part of the ship without referring to the list. The Count would frequently come down on the quarter-deck when the watch was fallen in for duty, and, standing close to the petty officer, would order him to put his book away and muster the men. Each man, as his name and number was called, had to double across the deck, and sometimes, one or two men whose names the petty officer could not remember, were left! Then the petty officer got something warm for not knowing his men!

When at sail or spar drill the captain expected to hear officers and petty officers on deck directing the hands to the different ropes they had to man next. The Count had a habit of walking from side to side of the poop, with eyes like a hawk's looking aloft or on deck, and occasionally shouting out in a shrill voice, "Not hauling, take his name!" at the same time pointing to the man he meant. Nothing would disturb the Count more than for an officer or petty officer to ask the man his name. Should I be near, I would tap the man on the back, hold up my hand and say, "Got him, sir." I never attempted to ask the man his name, but would keep an eye on him until I had a chance to write it down, then give it to the master-at-arms, which meant seven days 10.A for the man.

Captain Count Metaxa's sole aim when competing

with the squadron was for his ship to be the smartest. He expected to see every man double from rope to rope, and when finished to fall in smartly. Those he came down on were generally slow-coaches.

I found that, however severe he was at sea, he generally relaxed when the ship was in harbour, giving every encouragement to sport of all kinds, and would as far as possible grant leave to the men at every opportunity.

After the squadron had coaled ship and cleaned down, we held a regatta for sailing and rowing boats of all classes.

Two of our midshipmen, A. L. Cay and R. Y. Tyrwhitt—the latter being now Vice-Admiral Sir Reginald Tyrwhitt, Bart.—had fitted out our sailing pinnace with a set of private sails, and asked me if I would make one of the crew. Of course, nothing pleased me better. We had a fine race in the "All Comers" sailing race, and I believe we took the second or third prize. I rowed in one or two races the next day.

General leave was given to each watch in turn. I and two of my messmates went on shore for a walk in the country.

It was a strange sight to us to see the native women, both young and old, walking along the white-dusty roads in their bare feet, wearing a long, loose, white muslin gown, and chewing from a short piece of sugar cane which they held in their hand. They possessed lovely white teeth, quite a contrast to their dark, shining faces.

Stranger still was the affectionate salutation which we received from four dusky damsels as we passed by, of "Good morning, my darlings!" or "Good morning, my dears!" then passing on as if nothing out of the ordinary had been said. Two of us being married men, looked straight ahead, and kept our chins up, until we were well away. We received several salutations from others whom we passed on the road, and we found

out afterwards that it was their usual custom to address each other in that affectionate manner. They were a happy lot of people, with their "Dignity Balls," which helped us to enjoy a very pleasant holiday.

Leaving Barbadoes under sail, the squadron went on a trip around the different islands, visiting Trinidad and Grenada. Leaving Grenada under sail we saw the strange sight of four ships sailing in different directions in their efforts to get out of the harbour. The wind seemed to be blowing in every direction at once. Our ship was going along on the starboard tack; another, going in the same direction, was on the port tack; another about a mile away had the wind on her quarter; and the *Active*, I think it was, had got well away.

We gradually worked our way out and got into station before dark, calling and remaining a few days at St. Lucia and Dominica.

Anchoring in Prince Rupert's Bay in the latter island 12.35 p.m., a seining party went away for an afternoon's sport, and returned with a splendid haul of fish.

Leaving Dominica 3 p.m., February 15th, we arrived at Antigua the next day, meeting there the British North American and West Indies Squadron, which shortly after our arrival left for the North.

While lying at Antigua, a shooting match was arranged between a team of officers from the squadron and a team of Sugar Planters. Lieutenant Pakenham, our gunnery lieutenant, asked me if I would go on shore in charge of the markers, two of whom were taken from each ship.

There was a very good rifle range on the island, paper targets being used. It was the first time I had seen or marked with them, and at first found it very difficult to discover the small hole made by the bullet; the report from the rifle and a "ping" at the target being our only guide when a shot was fired; but we soon

H.M.S. Calypso, 1889
Booming along with studding-sails both sides

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got used to the difference in marking between an iron and a paper target, and gave every satisfaction to both teams.

After the match, when our gear had been stowed away, the markers sat down in a large marque to a fine spread of roast mutton, cut from the carcass of a whole sheep, and several other dainties, with fruit galore. We returned on board after having enjoyed a pleasant day in the country, passing several large fields of growing sugar cane.

The squadron weighed anchor and proceeded under sail for Montserrat—where the lime juice comes from—coming to anchor 1.30 a.m., Sunday, February 24th; the water was so clear that the anchor and cable could be seen lying at the bottom. The Roman Catholics were sent on shore here to church. We were told that the majority of the natives in Montserrat, and in the islands near were Roman Catholics, having been converted by the ship loads of Irish girls sent there during the time of Cromwell!

Leaving Montserrat, the squadron sailed for Nevis and then on to St. Kitts. At each of these Islands seining parties were allowed to go on shore in the evening, and had good fun; the water was so warm that one could remain in it for hours. We generally had a good haul of fish on these expeditions.

The squadron sailed for Barbadoes, arriving there March 9th. Sailing for England March 21st, we called at Flores in the Azores, where the ships took on board two days' supply of fresh beef and soft bread; each ship also hoisting in on board two live bullocks to carry on with after the first supply was exhausted. Our first lieutenant sent for me to shoot one of the bullocks on the fourth morning, and the other when the ship's steward required it.

The first one I shot, the butcher, a marine, led the beast between a pair of guns and close to the large

cleat for securing the main-tack, putting a three inch rope around his neck in case he bolted, and secured it to the cleat. I loaded my rifle, got the butcher to move the bullock around so as to face inboard, then, should the bullet pass through its body it would go through the side of the ship instead of ricochetting along the deck. I stood about four feet away, took careful aim between the eyes and fired. The bullock jumped about eighteen inches off the deck with the shock of the blow from the Martini-Henry bullet and dropped on the deck, the butcher finishing it with a knife. When shooting the other one, I adopted a different method; instead of standing away from the bullock and then taking aim, I got him in position, and placing the muzzle end of the rifle just above his eyes in the centre, pressed the trigger. The bullock dropped dead without a tremor. Since then I have always been in favour of using the humane killer for cattle.

Approaching the Bay of Biscay, it came on to blow, and we had to reef our topsails. Unfortunately, H.M.S. *Volage* lost a man overboard. Passing Portland, the squadron parted company, H.M.S. *Calypso* and *Rover* making for Chatham, where they arrived April 26th, 1889, after a most interesting but strenuous cruise.

CHAPTER XXX

OUR CRUISE TO THE BALTIC AND SUMMER MANŒUVRES

The ship's company were granted ten days' leave while the ship was refitting for our next trip. The *Calypso* sailed for the Downs on June 7th; arriving there she saluted the Commodore, whose pennant was flying in H.M.S. *Volage*, the *Active* not being ready to join the squadron. H.M.S. *Ruby* then arrived, taking the place of H.M.S. *Rover*.

The squadron left under steam for Copenhagen on June 8th. At 3-45 a.m. the next morning the *Ruby* reported a man overboard. She immediately stopped, lowered a lifeboat, and soon picked up her man. Just afterwards a fog came on, which became so dense that we were obliged to proceed very slowly, firing a signal gun every half hour.

When the fog lifted, a stiff breeze sprang up, the squadron making sail to assist the engines. The *Ruby* carried away her jib-boom, and reported a man overboard. She again lowered her lifeboat and picked him up.

The squadron came to anchor off Helsingör for the night, proceeding to Copenhagen the next morning, June 14th. The Danish Admiral visited the Commodore on board H.M.S. *Volage*, receiving a salute of fifteen guns as he left the ship.

Leave was granted to petty officers and badgemen, so one of my messmates and myself went off together to visit the Exhibition, which was then being held at

Copenhagen. It covered a large space, and was laid out in convenient galleries; but what interested us most were the pictures. Some splendid paintings by old Dutch and Italian masters were hung there. I was always fond of pictures, my chum was a kindred spirit. We spent several hours strolling around, and then returned on board.

On June 20th the squadron left for Stockholm, but stopped on June 22nd off Landsort to embark a pilot. Passing through the channel connecting the Baltic with Stockholm, the scenery was wonderful; high hills on either side, with numerous small cottages dotted about, some of them quite close to the water's edge, their bright red tiles showing up in striking contrast to the green foliage of the trees.

At 4.40 p.m. we stopped to exchange pilots to navigate the squadron through the Declaro Channel, arriving at Stockholm twelve midnight, Sunday, June 23rd; it was just like daylight at the time.

Stockholm has some splendid buildings; the Royal Palace is close to the sea front, Lake Malaren being studded with numerous wooded islands, with small steamboats plying between them and the landing stage on the mainland. It being Sunday leave was granted until 10 p.m.; we felt that this was rather too early to return on board in the land of the midnight sun!

Spending the afternoon looking around the city, I followed the track of several people making their way to some woods which were situated just outside. I noticed that most of them carried a twine hammock and a book. On entering the wood they would hang up their hammocks to two of the trees, and I suppose they would spend the night reading. Arriving at a small pier, I got into one of the steamboats, trusting to Providence where it would carry me, and was landed on one of the islands, where I soon made my way to a place where I could sit down and enjoy some

refreshment. I soon became friendly with young people who were sitting in the garden like myself, enjoying their glass of beer. Have you ever sat down with a group of people who cannot speak English, each trying to make the other understand? It's fine fun, especially if it is a party of young people! I was enjoying myself so much that I forgot the time! I did not leave that island until 12 midnight. Jumping into a boat I was taken to another island instead of to the mainland, where I remained a couple of hours. It was so fine, and the beer so good! At last I was able to find a man who could speak some English, and he directed me to the right boat to take me to the landing stage, where I got a rowing boat to take me on board at 3.45 a.m. instead of 10 p.m.

I was lined up with several other defaulters the next day; the first lieutenant asking each man in turn for his excuse, and stopping their leave for the remainder of the time we were in that port. On coming to me, he asked what excuse I had. I told him I got on the wrong island. He said "Did you? So did I," telling me of the trouble he had had to get to the proper landing stage. I replied "Just like me, sir; I had a terrible job to make them understand." Lieutenant Stuart then said, "Very well, I'll let it stand over."

The Squadron sailed from Stockholm on July 1st, embarking pilots to navigate the ships through the channel. After discharging the pilots we proceeded down the Baltic, passing through Kalmar Sound, then through the Sound separating Denmark and Sweden, and anchoring in the Rifo Fiord, Gothenburg, on July 5th, leaving again July 11th. The squadron came to anchor for the night off the Skaw Lighthouse, and in the early morning of July 12th we saw a most interesting sight; there appeared to be quite one hundred ships loaded with timber lying at anchor and waiting for a change of wind to carry them on their journey. Between

six and seven o'clock the change of wind which they had been waiting for came along. It was a sight worth while to see the men hurrying aloft to loose their sails, the hands on deck sheeting them home. The clank of the chain cables as they shortened in and hove up the anchors could be clearly heard over the water. When the anchors were off the ground and the yards trimmed to fill the sails, off they went on their journey like a huge flock of birds. The squadron weighed anchor at 8.30 a.m., sailing for Spithead, where a large fleet of ships had assembled in honour of a visit from the German Emperor to England.

On August 2nd, 1889, the German Emperor, with a fleet of twelve ships, arrived; our fleet firing a Royal Salute and manning yards.

On August 5th, the Emperor inspected our fleet, we firing a Royal Salute of twenty-one guns and manning the yards as the *Victoria and Albert* steamed through our lines.

H.M.S. *Calypso*, as forming part of "B" fleet, weighed anchor at 8 a.m., August 6th, and proceeded to the westward for manœuvres, 11.30 a.m. H.M.S. *Victoria and Albert*, with the German Emperor and the Prince of Wales on board, came out to watch the fleet. We anchored off Bournemouth that night, then proceeded down the Channel, anchoring off Teignmouth 6.30 p.m., August 7th.

The fleet left the next morning, proceeding to the coast of Ireland, and moored ship at Berehaven. On August 16th, H.M.S. *Calypso* parted company with the fleet. "B" fleet, being the enemy, had to make an attack on England and cut off her supplies, while our ship was detailed to patrol off Ushant to intercept all ships approaching England, just as the German submarines did during the late war.

Captain Count Metaxa was very keen on capturing as many ships as possible; therefore he insisted on a

good look-out being kept. The ship was disguised; the masts and yards painted black, and certain alterations were made in her rig to make her look like an ordinary tramp steamer. The Count sent for the executive petty officers, informing us of his plan of action; viz., that on sighting a vessel, the *Calypso* would steam full speed towards her until she came within range of her guns. Then he would signal that fact to her, get full particulars and keep her in range for one hour, after which we would fire a gun and signal to her that she was captured. The Count said he wanted the petty officers to take on during the daytime the duty of "look-out" at the masthead, and he promised that for every ship sighted and captured the man on duty would be granted four hours extra leave on arrival at Chatham. He expected the gunnery instructor to regulate the hours of duty.

I borrowed a pair of binoculars, taking them aloft with me each time I went on duty. I don't know how many ships were captured, but I know we had some exciting chases, especially with mail-boats during the week.

The *Calypso* joined the fleet at Berehaven, which had been used as their base; and filling up with coal after so much steaming, we sailed for Sheerness, arriving there September 1st, 1889. One day the captain sent for me and said, "How many ships have you to your credit?" I replied, "Five, sir." The Count said, "You are wrong, Riley; there are seven ships down against your name." I said, "Thank you, sir." The *Calypso* was towed to Chatham and lashed alongside the *Thunderbolt*, an old hulk. Seven days leave was granted to each watch, the petty officers being given the extra leave for each captured ship, which had been placed to their credit. I was entitled to eight days and four hours.

I was caught napping before going on leave. The day before the second leave started, I and a few other

petty officers were having a yarn on the upper deck, when the master-at-arms came and joined us; after a while he said, "I wonder if any of you remember a young fellow named Noble."

It being my duty to muster the gun's crews at quarters and to issue rifles to the men, I knew nearly everyone in the ship, so I said, "Yes, he was No. 5 at the third gun, starboard." The master-at-arms laughed and tapped me on the shoulder, saying, "You are just the man we want."

It appears that a wire was sent by the Admiralty to the ship to inquire if there were anyone who could identify Alexander Noble, a deserter from the *Calypso;* he was in the custody of the police at Hamilton, a town on the Clyde, opposite to Glasgow.

I was ordered to proceed to Hamilton to identify the prisoner, then I could go straight on to my home in Plymouth; railway passes being given to me. I started off on my long railway journey to Scotland, arriving in Hamilton after travelling all night. I appeared at the Police Court about 2 p.m. on Saturday, when I was asked the usual question as to whether I could identify the prisoner. I replied that I could. I was about to go when the magistrate called me back saying that I would have to take the prisoner back to his ship. I protested, telling him that my instructions were to identify the prisoner and then to proceed on my leave. I explained that there was no escort sent with me, neither had I any means of keeping him under control.

The magistrate sent a wire to the Admiralty, receiving instructions from them that I was to take him to his ship. I had to sign my name in receipt of the prisoner. They gave me a pair of handcuffs and I shackled myself to him and left the court muttering a few prayers! The sergeant of police very kindly informed me that Noble had given them the slip twice while in custody. I thought to myself I had a nice soft job on! As we got

to Glasgow, the platforms were swarming with people; whether a football match was on I don't know, but we were shoved and pushed about by the surging mass of people and I felt sure that if I had not been shackled to Noble I should have lost him. As it was, we were carried bodily along by his friends, trying to separate us, and dragging me with them. As I weighed over thirteen stone I was a kind of sheet anchor, and took some moving, but I was glad when we managed to get into the Edinburgh train and on to London and Chatham. Arriving on board shackled to my charge, I handed him over to the master-at-arms, and reported what had taken place at the Police Court. The captain kindly made up for my lost time, and gave orders for railway passes to be made out for me to return to Portsmouth, as the ship was due there on the morning my leave expired.

CHAPTER XXXI

A VISIT TO SPAIN, PORTUGAL AND THE WEST INDIES

On September 20th, 1889, Lieutenant Leslie C. L. Stuart, our first lieutenant, was relieved. He was a thorough seaman, setting a fine example to the midshipmen under training in the management of a ship's company.

He was relieved by another smart officer, Lieutenant Frederic E. E. Brock; now Admiral retired Sir Frederic E. E. Brock; two other officers, Lieutenant Satow and Lieutenant Nevile, joined the ship the same day that she left Sheerness to join the squadron at Spithead. I rejoined the *Calypso* as soon as she arrived.

The squadron proceeded to Portland, arriving the same day, and leaving again, on September 25th, for Cadiz. Sailing through the inner entrance of the breakwater as we left Portland, it was a pretty sight to see the four ships under full sail passing through the narrow entrance in succession, each ship manœuvring to keep station, then away down Channel, passing Portland Bill.

We arrived in Cadiz Harbour on October 2nd, and while lying there a signal was made for each ship to send a diving party to the *Active* to scrub her bottom. It had got very dirty with thick seaweed, thereby reducing her speed considerably. Mr. Webb, our gunner, being under the doctor's care, I was sent in charge of the *Calypso's* party; the work taking the divers four days.

Portugal, Spain, West Indies

Sailing from Cadiz, the squadron proceeded through the Straits of Gibraltar to Almeria, another Spanish port. Boats used to come off during the dinner hour loaded with fruit and eatables, including baskets of large green grapes, which were sold very cheaply, with the result that several of our youngsters indulged themselves too freely and became ill; the squadron having to sail for Gibraltar and land several cases for hospital treatment. We then proceeded to Cartagena, embarking a pilot to take the ship into harbour, where all ships had to moor with both anchors down, the stern of each ship being secured to the breakwater with wire hawsers made fast to bollards.

On October 22nd we slipped our hawsers and weighed anchor, embarking a pilot to take us out of harbour. The squadron sailed to Lisbon, and passing through the Straits, arrived at the mouth of the Tagus, where we shortened sail and steamed up the river, coming to anchor off Lisbon.

On October 25th, the squadron topped their yards, i.e., pulled yardarms as high as possible, while lowering the other yardarm by easing away on the lifts. The mainyards topped to port, while the fore and mizzen yards topped to starboard. It was a strange sight to see all the ships lying in the river with their yards thus "cockbilled" or raised up in the air. All ships fired guns every quarter of an hour in honour of the late King of Portugal, whose body was lying in state. At 4.30 p.m., on the arrival of H.R.H. Duke of Edinburgh to represent Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, the squadron fired a Royal salute, H.M.S. *Active* hoisting the Royal Standard.

The next day at 8 a.m. all ships hoisted the Portuguese Royal Standard half-mast, and at 5.30 p.m., the funeral service being over, the Royal Standard was hoisted close up and saluted with twenty-one guns; the squadron squaring their yards.

Sailing with the squadron from Lisbon, on November 2nd, H.M.S. *Calypso* arrived at Chatham nine days later, after another series of most interesting cruises, having visited several important places and satisfied the Wanderlust which was part of my nature.

The ship was thoroughly overhauled by the Dockyard authorities and refitted for her winter trip to the West Indies. We proceeded to Sheerness, taking in powder and shell, then discharging to barracks fifty-three men who had completed their training, and embarking a similar number of Ordinary Seamen and boys; also exchanging a few of our midshipmen.

H.M.S. *Calypso* joined the Training Squadron at Portland, on December 12th, 1889, discharging sub-lieutenants R. Y. Tyrwhitt and R. Webb to H.M.S. *Duke of Wellington*. I was very sorry to lose Mr. Tyrwhitt; he was always attentive at drill, and also possessed a certain restraining influence over the younger midshipmen, which was a great help to me, their instructor, who sometimes had a difficult task to curb their fondness for skylarking. It required patience and tact to deal with some of our future captains and admirals! It has been a hobby of mine, since leaving the Service, to follow, with the aid of a Navy List, the careers of the midshipmen who have passed through my hands in H.M.S. *Calypso* and *Edgar*.

Four days later the squadron sailed for the Canary Islands with Commodore A. T. Powlett in command, spending Christmas Day at sea. Lieutenant Pakenham very kindly sent his servant forward with something for myself and young Jerry Hayes, the Torpedo instructor, to "wet our eye.' We, with a few chums, quite enjoyed it, and drank his health.

Anchored off Grand Canary on December 29th, a rumour went around the lower deck that, owing to some dispute between England and Portugal about Delagoa Bay, the training squadron were to remain

cruising off the Canary Islands until further orders. The ships were cruising off the islands under sail from December 29th to February 9th, 1890; each ship taking turns to call at Las Palmas for the mail, and to bring off a supply of fresh beef for the other ships.

While the ships were cruising, and the weather being favourable, Lieutenant Pakenham embraced the opportunity of putting the whole ship's company through a course of Morris Tube firing; every man, including stokers, cooks and servants, having to fire fifteen rounds each.

I fixed targets on the booms, where all spare spars are kept, and well above the deck. It took a fortnight for the whole ship's company to fire their rounds. I had a trying time perched up on the booms in the sun for several hours each day, for those who had had very little experience in firing a rifle needed careful watching! I can assure you I was very glad when we came to the last batch of cooks and stewards; finishing and packing up at 6.30 p.m. and feeling quite fagged with my long day in the heat of the sun.

It happened to be my first watch out that night, eight to twelve. I was excused from keeping the morning watch to enable me to drill the midshipmen at 7.30. I was not very long on my mess before I became quite faint, slipping down on to the lockers. My messmates carried me across the compartment to the sick bay, where I remained for nearly two months. When the doctor came forward to examine me at 8 p.m. I was found to be suffering from a severe attack of rheumatic fever. Lying in another bed was an able seaman, whose name was Morris, suffering from the same complaint.

When Lieutenant Pakenham heard that I was laid up with rheumatic fever, his servant told me that he wanted to diet me at his own expense from the wardroom mess, but the doctor would not allow this, and I

and the other man were put on a special diet from the medical comforts—food preserved in tins—which were supplied to a ship for serious cases.

The squadron sailed for Barbadoes on February 9th. I was informed that while the gunner was in charge of a party firing with pistols on the booms, several shots went buzzing around H.M.S. *Volage*, in fact two shots went through her spanker; quite near enough to be unpleasant, the Count severely reprimanded him.

The squadron arrived at Barbadoes about a fortnight later, mooring ship in Carlisle Bay. I was still in bed, but getting much stronger, being able to get out of bed and walk up and down the sick bay. I was sorry to see that Morris was not making any improvement, the poor fellow passing away the day after we arrived, and being buried on shore.

We had been in harbour six days and I was longing for a run on shore, so I begged the doctor to let me go under the care of my messmates for a drive in the country. I promised I would come off before six. But the doctor said it was too risky, as I was not strong enough.

I had to remain on the sick list until the ship had left Barbadoes. Perhaps it was for the best, for when I did go on deck I felt so giddy that when they were working ship under sail I had to hang on to the ropes around the masts, but I gradually gained sufficient strength to enable me to go aloft when required.

The squadron called at St. Thomas, then on to St. Kitts, where a sailing regatta for all boats was held. Needless to say, I did not take part in it this time. We then returned to St. Thomas remaining there just over a week. On March 22nd we sailed for Bermuda, arriving at the entrance to the "Narrows" a week later, where we embarked a pilot and steamed up the "Narrows," anchoring in Grassy Bay. It was said that in

the early '80s, Captain Harry W. Brent sailed my old ship, H.M.S. *Amethyst*, up the "Narrows," an achievement requiring great skill.

Leave was granted to petty officers and badgemen until 6 p.m. so I went on shore just to feel my feet. I had not been out of the ship for nearly four months. Crossing the bridge from the dockyard, a few of us went for a walk, and coming to a Sailors' Institute, we went in and refreshed ourselves, returning on board none the worse for my saunter round.

The squadron sailed for England on March 31st, embarking a pilot to take the ships out of the "Narrows." We then made sail, whenever there was a stiff breeze blowing. With the wind abaft the beam, the officer of the watch, in order to keep station, often had to shorten sail because the *Calypso* quickly overhauled the ship ahead of her.

I remember one Sunday, about 8.30 a.m. we were furling the mainsail, as the *Calypso* was closing on the others on account of the amount of sail on her. I remained on the mainyard after the men had cleared down from aloft, as I wanted to see that everything was snug before going down myself; then I ran down the weather rigging. Arriving at the bottom I, without a thought, instead of going through the opening on to the "Jacob's ladder," ran along the gunwale or netting on the board, which was about four inches wide, to the gangway and down the ladder.

There was hardly a soul on deck except the officer of the watch, the quartermaster, and two men at the wheel; the men were below changing their clothes for divisions. I had no sooner put my foot on the deck when I heard the Count's shrill voice shout out, "Riley!" I ran aft and up the poop ladder. There was the Count in his favourite position, leaning on the grating around the standard compass, looking forward, his eye like a hawk's, watching everything taking place on deck.

I saluted and stood to attention. He said, "Riley, smartness is commendable, but recklessness is condemnable!" I was flabbergasted at his flow of words! I said, "Yes, sir," turned about and ran forward to get ready for divisions. During the trip home Commodore Powlett inspected the ship at sea. The *Calypso* hove to while he came on board, after the inspection. The Commodore gave instructions for the ship's company to fall in on the quarter-deck; when he told us how pleased he was with the smartness of the men at drill, and with the cleanliness of the ship. He said great praise was due to the captain, officers and petty officers for the smartness of the ship's company. Shortly afterwards the Commodore left the ship to rejoin the *Active*.

We arrived at Chatham on April 23rd, and were given ten days' leave, the ship in the meantime being refitted and got ready for the next cruise, which was a short one to Christiania and Queensferry.

The *Calypso* joined the training Squadron in the downs, sailing for Christiania (now Oslo) and engaging a pilot to take the ships up the Channel. Arriving on June 21st we moored ship in single line ahead, with the *Calypso* in the berth nearest the city; the flagship H.M.S. *Active* being outside.

Notices were posted up on shore that Commodore Powlett had granted permission for the ships to be open to visitors from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.. The *Calypso*, having the nearest berth, was crowded with people, the majority of whom were girls eager to see the inside of our ship, and, perhaps, to see the sailors too! During the day we arranged with our orchestra, which was composed of a violinist, one violoncellist and two banjo players, to bring their instruments on deck and give us some music.

When the ship was full of vistors, the orchestra mounted a gun platform which they were using for their

stand, and broke forth with a good waltz. The first evening it was amusing to see the way our fellows approached the girls, who were standing around, asking them to dance, doing it all by motions, as none understood each other's language. There was shy hesitation on the part of each girl at first, until Jack placed his arm gently around her waist and led her forth; the rhythm of the music soon made our feet understand!

After the first evening there was no difficulty in selecting partners, and the girls seemed most eager for a swing around. I suppose it was the novelty of dancing on board ship that appealed to them; it was great fun for us, and we were sorry when the day arrived to leave Christiania.

The squadron sailed for Queensferry a week later, embarking pilots to navigate the ships to the Skager-Rak; then making sail for the mouth of the Firth of Forth, where we shortened and furled sails. As we steamed up the Forth we passed under the arches of Forth Bridge with royal yards crossed, and on approaching the bridge it looked as if our masts would be snapped off, but as we passed through it was seen that we had plenty of room to spare between the top of the mast and the arches. It was said that the training squadron was the first fleet of ships with masts and yards to pass under the Forth Bridge. We came to anchor off Queensferry on July 2nd. Leave being granted the next day from 1 p.m. until 7 a.m. the following morning, everyone who could took the opportunity of visiting Edinburgh, with its fine streets and gardens; and to see Holyrood Palace and Arthur's Seat.

The train from Queensferry to Edinburgh was packed with men from the four ships, and they soon spread themselves over the city. After seeing the sights, several of my chums and I spent the evening at a music hall, where I remember one of the "turns" was a Scotch lassie dressed in kilts, and singing "A

Rolling Stone Gathers No Moss." She sang it very sweetly, but I thought to myself, however comfortable it may be, staying at home and gathering moss, I would rather have had my experience than a cartload of it! After the show was over, we tried to get lodgings for the night, for we had foolishly forgotten to arrange for them before going to the music hall, and everywhere that we applied was full up, there being so many men on shore, so we found our way to Waverley Station and lay down in the waiting rooms. There was not much sleep that night. We caught the first train for Queensferry, and arrived on board in good time, taking something with us to fry for breakfast, as there was no canteen in the *Calypso*.

Four days later the squadron left Queensferry, the *Calypso* parting company and making for Sheerness. Having coaled ship, she sailed for Portland to join the fleet under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir George Tryon. The combined fleet then left Portland for a cruise down Channel, anchoring in Falmouth Bay on July 30th. The *Calypso* was ordered by signal to proceed at full speed to the Lizard, where, having communicated with the lighthouse, we rejoined the fleet in Falmouth Bay.

CHAPTER XXXII

TRANSFERRING THE ISLAND OF HELIGOLAND TO THE GERMANS

About two days later Captain Metaxa was instructed by signal to make for Sheerness at once. Steaming off at full speed, the wind being favourable we also made sail, arriving at Sheerness early on Monday. Here we coaled and provisioned ship, slipped our buoy the following afternoon, and proceeded at full speed for Heligoland to remove the guns, munitions and stores from the island, and to attend at the ceremony of transferring the island to the Germans.

Early the next morning our gunnery lieutenant landed with a working party of sixty four seamen, three carpenters and some midshipmen; taking with them spars, tackles and plenty of rope. I was sorry I could not go with them because a few days before I had damaged my foot, so my opposite number, Jerry Hayes, torpedo instructor, went in my place, I remaining on board with the gunner to check and stow the munitions as they came off and were hoisted on board.

Lieutenant Pakenham divided the party; one section was to clear the magazines and carry the powder and shell through the town and down a long pier to the boats. Lieutenant Pakenham took the second and larger party on to the cliffs to rig shears to lower the guns by to the boats below.

The bo'sun, a few midshipmen and a party of men took spare anchors and a wire hawser in the sailing

pinnace and cutter, and rowing on shore, secured the wire to the anchors. These were dropped over the side, in line with the sheers on the cliffs but well off the shore; the cutter then took the end of the wire and bent it on to a small line which was lowered over the face of the cliff.

When the shears were erected and properly secured, the wire was hauled up, the end being rove through a block secured to the head of the sheer and then hauled well taut, and set up with a purchase on shore, just like the hawser of a life-saving apparatus when secured to the mast of a wreck. The guns were hoisted and secured to the wire on a runner, then eased down the hawser as a breeches-buoy brings the crew of a wreck to shore. When the gun was low enough, it was secured to the side of the pinnace, and the runner was then hauled up for the next gun. The working party did not return on board until about nine o'clock, nearly fifteen hours' hard work. The same party landed again early the next morning, not returning that night until nine o'clock, as the work had to be finished before the Germans took over the island the next day.

When the party returned on board, my mess mates were complaining of the behaviour of some of the people on the pier, in obstructing the passage of the men carrying the munitions to the boat, this nearly leading to fisticuffs. The leading hands who had been on shore working during that strenuous time, were full of praise of Lieutenant Pakenham. They said he was the life and soul of the party, encouraging the men, and lending a hand when necessary. It was smart work getting that stuff off the island in two days; fifteen hours hard work each day! The bo'sun's party did not return until an hour and a half later. The anchors had caught in the rocks, and they were compelled to leave them behind.

Transfer of Heligoland Island

On August 9th, at 8 a.m. Lieutenant Pakenham instructed me to pick out fifty men to form a guard of honour. He asked me if I could get my boot on as he wanted me to go on shore with the company. I said at once, "Yes, sir, I'll manage it." I told the men when the bugle sounded they were to fall in on the quarter-deck with their rifles and leather gear, and wearing their leggings. When the bugle sounded, I sized and proved the company, and then reported to the gunnery lieutenant, who inspected them.

A party of twenty-five marines was also detailed to form a guard of honour on the pier to receive the German representative when he landed. Both guards of honour landed on the pier at 1.30 p.m., the marines being formed up facing the landing stage.

The Bluejackets, with two midshipmen as guides, were marched by Lieutenant Pakenham through the town to the lawn in front of Government House, where we were halted, facing the House, and with our right flank close to the flagstaff with the Union Jack flying.

As Herr von Botticher and his retinue landed our marine guard of honour presented arms, and the *Calypso* fired a salute of seventeen guns. They then proceeded through the town to Government House.

On their arrival they were received by His Excellency the Governor, the guard presenting arms. Shortly afterwards His Excellency, followed by the Germans in their helmets with white plumes, stepped out on to the lawn and read the Articles of the Anglo-German Agreement concerning the cession of Heligoland to Germany. At four o'clock, one of our midshipmen hoisted the German Ensign on the flagstaff alongside the British Union Jack to the "Hochs" or cheers of crowds of people; H.M.S. *Calypso* firing a salute of twenty-one guns

A lot of clamour was made during the late war about the foolishness of England in transferring Heligoland

to the Germans. But an island situated nearly four hundred miles from England would have been a source of worry to this country during the war. It was only forty-five miles from the German coast, so if we had retained it they could easily have smashed it with their Zeppelins and aircraft bombing it. With all the millions which Germany had spent on its armament and strong fortifications, Heligoland had no real influence or effect on the war. As nothing had been provided for us on shore in the way of refreshment, both guards of honour had to return on board for tea, landing again to take part in the ceremony of hauling down the Colours at sunset. The marine guard remained on the pier to honour our late Governor as he left the island to embark on board H.M.S. *Calypso*, for passage to Sheerness. Lieutenant Pakenham marched his men to Government House, taking up the same position on the lawn as before, with the right flank near the flagstaff. I, being in the supernumerary rank in rear, saw that while we had been on board the turf of the lawn had been cut into squares, appearing as though it had been removed and then replaced .

When the buglers had taken up their position on the steps, our right guide cast off the halyards in readiness to haul down the Colours when the gun should be fired. The buglers sounded the sunset, and our guide started to haul down both flags together, as the flags at sunset are hauled down very slowly, working by the sound of the bugle. The halyards being small he could not manage both together, so I ran over and said to him, "Give me one, sir," and taking one of the halyards in my hand we hauled both Ensigns down very slowly bringing the flags in line with the cleat on the last sound of the bugles. I then saw that I had hauled down the last British Flag hoisted at Heligoland; the right guide having hauled down the German Flag. It never occurred to me to unbend our flag from the

halyards and bring it away with me, which I could easily have done.

The ceremony being over, we were marched down to the beach to the left of the pier, to wait for boats to take us to the ship. We were waiting and wondering in the growing darkness why the boats did not come, but found out eventually that the *Calypso* had weighed anchor and moved farther out.

At about nine o'clock Lieutenant Pakenham called me over to him and gave me money to buy a bottle of beer for each man, telling me to take a couple of men with me. I went up to the nearest café, which was crowded with people drinking beer, and all talking German, but they simply ignored us. I found the proprietor and explained to him what I wanted, telling him that I would bring the cases and empties back in a very short time. I had to pay a deposit on them. Feeling rather dry after the long day we had had, I had a bottle of beer while we were waiting, letting the men have one as well; it was very light stuff. We carried the cases down to the beach and I opened out the ranks and gave each man a bottle. Strange to say, there were no teetotallers among them! At all events, no one refused a bottle! It was quite dark by this time. Presently I gathered up the empties and returned them to the café.

I need not tell you how disappointed we all were at the shabby treatment we received from the people of Heligoland, in not asking the men who had been on duty on shore to have a cup of tea or any other refreshment; it left a very bad impression on our minds. I cannot repeat what the men of the *Calypso* said about it!

At last the steam pinnace hove in sight, towing a boat nearly full up with marines. Lieutenant Pakenham, seeing it was impossible to pack our men into it, sent one of the midshipmen to hire a shore boat.

When it arrived the men who could not find room in the other boat, soon filled it, and were towed off to the ship. When the captain found that Lieutenant Pakenham had hired a shore boat he was very displeased, and threatened to make him pay for it.

The company was inspected and dismissed, returning their rifles to the racks, and were getting their hammocks down to turn in when the bo'sun's mate piped "Clear lower deck, hoist in all boats." Having done so, we manned the capstan to weigh anchor, steaming away for Sheerness about three o'clock in the morning. The first lieutenant, F. E. E. Brock, before "piping down" instructed the captains of tops to keep only the men actually required for duty on deck, the others to turn in when piped down.

I was surprised to hear from Mr. Webb, the gunner, the next morning that the *Calypso* had passed His Imperial Majesty, the German Emperor, in his yacht, *Hohenzollern*, accompanied by H.M.S. *Irene*, at 5.40 a.m.; H.M.S. *Calypso* hoisting the German flag at the main, and firing a salute of twenty-one guns. I and others in the fore compartment had never heard a sound! and I could hardly believe it until I saw the armourers sponging and oiling the guns.

Arriving at Sheerness the next day, Mr. Barkley left the ship at 1 p.m. The hands were employed in hoisting the guns and stores into lighters and coaling ship. The *Calypso* slipped from her buoy on August 12th, proceeding on a cruise up the north-east coast of England and Scotland, communicating with the principal coastguard stations, until she arrived at the Island of Lewis, then returning to rejoin the Fleet under Sir George Tryon, at Portland.

The *Calypso* joined the Training Squadron at Spithead after seven days leave had been granted to each watch at Chatham; this we felt we had thoroughly deserved after our strenuous time at Heligoland. The

Transfer of Heligoland Island

Training Squadron was off on another short cruise, but before we got away our gunnery lieutenant left the ship. I was very sorry to lose Mr. Pakenham, for during the two years I served under him I was brought in almost daily contact with him in the course of my duties as gunnery instructor, during the whole of which time I never heard him make use of an angry word. I felt I had lost a friend, and the ship an officer and a gentleman.

The squadron sailed for Vigo, and then via Gibraltar to Algiers, where we arrived on October 4th. The squadron moored to a buoy inside the breakwater, a number of merchant ships of different nationalities also being anchored there, as there is a large export trade carried on with the interior.

Leave being granted, two of my messmates and I went on shore for a run. We appointed Jimmie Barry, a quartermaster, as caterer and to pay all expenses. He changed a sovereign at the money-changers to go on with, getting 25 francs, 25 cents for it. Old "Sails" and I soon found that we had made a mistake in appointing Jimmie as caterer; he was too "hard over"! We had all our work cut out to make him spend anything; He never seemed to have a thirst, no matter how far we walked! but we spent a pleasant day, and, with all Jimmie's closeness, we saw to it that he had very little left when we got on board!

Leaving Algiers, we returned to Gibraltar, where Lieutenant H. G. Moncton joined the ship as gunnery officer. I had previously served under him as gunnery instructor in H.M.S. *Belleisle*. The squadron left Gibraltar for a cruise down the African coast, anchoring on October 20th at Mogador, where we had a surprise.

In the evening we saw a lot of native boats dividing themselves equally between the ships. The boats were loaded with presents from the people of Mogador of

live sheep, poultry, eggs and fruit, which were divided among the lower deck messes; we thought it very kind of them. I had never seen anything like it before. We remained at Mogador until October 23rd, and then sailed for England, calling at Portland and proceeding to Chatham to refit for the winter cruise to the West Indies. Having completed my time in the *Calypso* I was relieved on December 4th, 1890. During the time I served in her the *Calypso* visited thirty different ports outside the British Isles. The Training Squadron was a fine fleet to see the world in. I returned to H.M.S. *Cambridge*, but as I had been away from the gunnery school over two years, I had to re-qualify, and then be examined. It was a unique record for a man to pass three examinations for gunnery instructor.

After my examination I was placed on the Staff of the *Cambridge* by Lieutenant (afterwards Admiral Sir) George E. Patey, the first gunnery officer, being made instructor for the "captains of guns" classes. These are now known as gun-layers. I had to strip and explain the mechanism of every gun mounting at that time used in the Service; also to take the classes out to carry out their course of heavy gun firing from the different types of guns mounted in the gunboats attached to the *Cambridge*, and while carrying out this duty I naturally came under the notice of the gunnery officers in charge of the firing practice. When a vacancy occurred I was promoted chief gunnery instructor, being then placed in charge of cutlass and pistol instruction. I remained on the Staff until I was drafted to H.M.S. *Edgar* on March 2nd, 1893.

CHAPTER XXXIII

COMMISSIONING OF H.M.S. "EDGAR," MARCH 2ND, 1893

THE *Edgar*, a first class cruiser built at Devonport, was commissioned there by Captain, afterwards Admiral Sir William Dyke Acland, Bart., with a complement of 555 men all told. The second in command was Commander F. W. Keary.

She was a very fast cruiser, and was armed with two 9.2-inch guns, ten 6-inch quick-firing guns, six of them mounted on the upper deck and four in armoured casements in the centre part of the main deck; when at sea the casemate guns were dismounted from their firing positions and were secured on chocks inside the casemate. She also carried numerous 3- and 6-pounders quick-firing and machine guns. In fact the *Edgar* was the pioneer ship of the later improvments in naval armaments. The system in vogue in the Navy when commissioning a ship is a wonderful piece of organisation. The different ratings selected from the respective ships and depôts arrive on board with their kit-bags and bedding at 8.30 a.m., hundreds of men meeting for the first time. Each man as he steps over the gangway is asked his name; he is then given a chit with the following details on it: Number of his mess; his number; his watch and part of the ship; the number of his rifle and the gun he is stationed at, and his boat. After receiving the chit he gets his hammock, or service "four-poster," slings it for hanging up and stows it away, also a bag for his clothing.

The hands are then piped to fall in according to their part of the ship, the captains of tops mustering their men and then reporting.

The Commander next orders "Clear lower deck, everyone aft," he then reads stations; first, fire stations, and exercises the ship's company at them to ensure that every man knows his station and where to fix the hoses in case of fire. The men are then closed up around their guns, magazine men to their stations, making a busy forenoon.

The following day the *Edgar* was undocked and moored to a buoy in the Hamoaze, lighters coming along-side with provisions and stores. We coaled ship ready for our steam trials, and proceeding out of harbour the ship was taken outside to steam at various speeds on the measured mile, and passed her trials successfully.

Owing to the high rate of speed attained by the *Edgar* on her trials, she was always know afterwards as the West Country "greyhound."

Returning to our buoy up the harbour we took in powder and shell; after the magazine and shell rooms were stowed, the ship's company were practised at their different drills and stations ready for inspection.

At 9 a.m. on March 21st Admiral H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh, Commander-in-Chief at Devonport, came on board to inspect the ship and to muster the crew by the "Open List." The following procedure is carried out in all ships: The Inspecting Officer stands behind a table, at which is seated a clerk with a ledger containing the names and number of every man in the ship; the Captain and officers are grouped around and the men are formed up in fours according to their number on one side of the deck.

Instructors in a ship are the senior executive petty officers and come first on the list. Each man, as his name is called by the clerk, takes three paces forward to the table and halts, salutes, and states in a loud, clear

H.M.S. Edgar Two 9.2-inch Guns Ten 6-inch Quick-firing Guns
Commissioned March 2nd, 1893

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voice his number on the books, rating, badges and other qualifications. His Royal Highness left the ship at 11.55, returning the next day at 10 a.m. to test the ship's company at their several stations and drills. He did not leave until 3.30 p.m., having given us a good shake up.

On March 23rd the *Edgar* proceeded out of harbour and sailed for Gibraltar, making what was then considered a record passage for a man-of-war. We left the same evening for Malta.

On our way out it was decided to form a Rugby Football Club, our Gunnery Lieutenant, R. G. Gregory, being the moving spirit. A committee was appointed and our chief writer, George Tickle, offered his services and was accepted as secretary.

We arrived at Malta on March 29th and moored to a buoy in what was known as French Creek.

It may be of interest to readers to know that the officers, stewards, assistants and cooks in most ships on the Mediterranean station are Maltese or Italians, the men engaged in England usually returning home by the first ship, though some of them may remain.

In the year 1893 canteens were not established on board ship on that station, the requirements of the lower deck being provided for by Maltese bumboatmen who lived on the Ship, acting as shop-keepers. They were given every facility and were provided with store-rooms. Having their own boat, they did their marketing at each port of call, remaining in the ship the whole commission. The men on the lower deck who purchased their goods had no voice in their selection, everything was absolutely in the hands of the Commanding Officers of the respective ships, who were no doubt influenced by the advice of the Masters-at-arms, and also by considerations of keeping the ship supplied with sand, bath bricks, emery paper and other necessary articles used in keeping the ship clean, for which the Commander would otherwise have had to pay out of his own pocket.

On April 2nd Vice-Admiral Sir George Tryon, Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, came on board. The *Edgar* slipped from the buoy and proceeded with Admiral Tryon to Spezia in the Gulf of Genoa; no doubt he wished to make himself acquainted with the latest addition to his Fleet. Arriving at Spezia we secured to a buoy in the harbour and saluted the Italian flag with twenty-one guns. The Admiral transferred his flag to H.M.S. *Dreadnought*, which was moored in the harbour together with several other ships of the 1st Division.

While laying at Spezia we enjoyed our first game of football. Lieutenant Gregory managed to fix up a match with a team from H.M.S. *Sans Pareil*, and a fairly good team was got together, comprising officers—the parson included—and men from the lower deck. Having played several games before joining the *Edgar*, and being a hefty chap of over thirteen stone, I played forward. The match was played well outside the city, and after a fairly even game the *Sans Pareil* won by a try, three points. We were quite satisfied with the result of our first match.

On April 13th the *Edgar* returned to Malta with the Commander-in-Chief on board; H.M.S. *Surprise* arriving four days later having on board Lord Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, and Admiral Sir F. W. Richards, First Sea Lord. They were on a tour of inspection. The following morning their Lordships inspected the men of the Fleet on the Corradina at battalion and physical drill under arms. The *Edgar* having but recently joined the station she was detailed to supply a guard of honour. We formed up on the road above the Corradina, from whence we had a splendid view of the men at drill. It was a pretty sight to see a couple of thousand men in their white flannel shirts and blue trousers swinging their rifles as one man to the sound of the music of the massed bands of the fleet. The Corra-

dina is a large open space on the right side of French Creek, with the Marina on the other side. It is a fine place for practice of all kinds of sports, being very level. While lying at Malta, our football team spent many hours there at practice, keeping fit, in both mind and body.

The *Edgar* sailed for Salonica to join the 2nd Division of the Fleet—H.M.S. *Nile*, *Edinburgh*, *Collingwood*, *Scout* and *Fearless*. On May 15th the Division weighed anchor and proceeded on a cruise, visiting Kavala, Thasos and Mitylene, and while at sea the Fleet stopped to allow the ships' companies to bathe, each ship lowering a boat to attend to its bathers.

Proceeding on our way, the Fleet anchored at Stampalia for the night, then on to Suda Bay where the racing boat crews practised early in the morning and late in the evening.

Our Division weighed anchor on June 2nd and proceeded to sea, joining up with the first Division the next day. Vice Admiral Sir George Tryon on board H.M.S. *Victoria* was in command of the combined Fleet; Rear Admiral A. H. Markham on board H.M.S. *Camperdown* being the second in command. The Fleet arrived at Marmarice June 5th, carrying out torpedo practice.

It is said that the number "thirteen" is unlucky; well, the Fleet under the command of Sir George Tryon sailed from Marmarice on June 13th for that fateful cruise up the Syrian coast which was to end so disastrously for many homes. The Fleet called at Haifa and Acre, arriving at Beirut on Saturday evening, June 7th.

H.M.S. *Colossus* sailed homeward bound on June 20th. She was cheered by the Fleet as she steamed through the lines; we heard afterwards that she was detained at Malta when the news arrived there of the disaster to the *Victoria*.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE LOSS OF H.M.S. "VICTORIA," JUNE 22ND, 1893

On Thursday, June 22nd, the Fleet weighed anchor at 9.45 a.m. and proceeded to sea for Tripoli, a short distance up the coast. Thursday afternoon—being a "make and mend clothes" day, an Admiralty afternoon off—most of the men went below for a nap or to do a little sewing. I remained on deck yarning and watching the Fleet until 2.30, then went below for a stretch off on our lockers for a nap.

At 3.35 p.m. we were awakened by the bo'sun's mate piping "Clear lower deck, away all boats crews." All hands rushed on deck at the unusual call; all the boats hanging at the davits were manned. The news soon flew around that the *Camperdown* had rammed the *Victoria*.

I jumped up on the platform for lowering the first cutter, one of our sub-lieutenants, Mr. A. B. W. Higginson, got on the forepart of the platform near the foremost fall of the cutter, while I stood by the after fall and close to the lowerer, D. Sheehan.

When I first got on deck the *Camperdown* had backed astern clear of the *Victoria*. Captain Dyke Acland altered the *Edgar's* course to port and stopped the engines, which brought our ship off the port bow of the *Victoria* and about three or four hundred yards away from her.

We could see an officer and a group of men on the starboard side of her fo'c'sle; they appeared to be trying

to get what I took to be a collision mat over the side, but as the *Victoria* was slowly steaming ahead it was very difficult for them to get the mat down over the hole. There was not a soul on the portside of the fo'c'sle. I said to Mr. Higginson, " Surely they haven't any ground line on," i.e. a length of small chain usually kept under the keel and secured on each side of the fo'c'sle.

Except for the men working for'ard the deck was clear; all hands must have fallen in on the superstructure deck. As the *Victoria* was slowly forging ahead we gradually dropped astern. The water could be seen creeping over the fo'c'sle, first getting around the men's feet, then up their legs, until the officer in charge, finding it impossible to remain there any longer, gave the order to clear aft. It was painful to see those men slowly wading their way aft after having striven so hard to get the mat over the hole without success. I felt within myself when I saw them leaving the fo'c'sle, there was no hope for the *Victoria*.

I was so anxious for the order to lower the boats that I told Sheehan to ease the after fall around the cleat a little. No doubt the men in the boats were as anxious as I was, seeing the *Victoria* on our starboard bow, with the signal flying " Negative boats," her bows well down, and gradually heeling over to starboard, making it very difficult for the men on the superstructure deck to keep their feet. The port propeller blades were churning up the water.

I will try and explain her position. Hold your right hand straight with the back upwards; imagine the part of your little finger inside the nail as the place where she was rammed; gradually lower your fingers, at the same time inclining the back of your hand to the right until you bring the ball of your thumb up; you have then the spot where the propeller was situated. That is the position as I saw it just before the *Victoria* went down.

A minute or two before she dipped, I saw two men, whom I was told were two Maltese bumboatmen, jump overboard from the forepart of the superstructure deck; then three men, then four, until it became general on the order being given "Every man for himself." It all happened so quickly that they appeared like a flock of birds.

All boats were lowered and were quickly away on their errand of mercy, trying to save as many as possible. It was awful to see the *Victoria* disappear in broad daylight and without a ripple on the water, the sea was so calm. The last thing we could see of her was her port propeller churning up the water and playing havoc with the poor fellows who had got within the sweep of the blades. While the boats were away we hoisted out our sailing pinnace and took soundings near where the *Victoria* went down; finding a muddy bottom and seventy fathoms of water. At 5.10 all boats returned and were hoisted, and the fleet proceeded to Tripoli, anchored at 6.30 p.m. The *Edgar* sent a diving party to the *Camperdown*; her bows were badly damaged and water had entered some of her fore compartments. The diving party returned to the ship at 10.30 p.m. The next day H.M.S. *Fearless* was dispatched to Malta with some of the survivors. We sent three shipwrights and one blacksmith to the *Camperdown* at 6 a.m. H.M.S. *Sans Pareil* hoisted the flag of the late Commander-in-Chief half mast at 8 a.m. All colours were hoisted at half mast.

The dead bodies of Fleet Paymaster Rickcord and five men were picked up by the boats. They were buried in the Turkish Cemetery at Tripoli, funeral parties being landed to attend the burial. This brought the total number of lives lost to twenty-two officers and three hundred and thirty-six men; a terrible tragedy. The number saved was twenty-nine officers and two hundred and sixty-nine men.

Loss of H.M.S. " Victoria "

A special funeral service was held on all ships at 6.30 p.m. The *Sans Pareil* saluted the Flag of the late Sir George Tryon by firing seventeen minute guns, his flag being hauled down at sunset. The Turkish fort at Tripoli also fired a salute.

Our diving party and mechanics returned to the ship and were employed the whole of the next day patching up the *Camperdown*. On Sunday at 4 p.m. we received two officers and six men survivors from the late *Victoria*; we also hoisted on board one of the *Victoria's* cutters which had broken adrift. On Monday at 8 a.m. we received eighteen more officers and one hundred and thirty-six men, also four Maltese bumboatmen; the others had gone on in the *Fearless*.

On Monday, June 26th, the *Edgar* weighed anchor at 9.30 a.m. and steamed through the lines of the Fleet for Malta, arriving on Friday, June 30th, and moored to a buoy in Grand Harbour. We discharged the officers and men from the *Victoria* to H.M.S. *Hibernia* and also sent the *Victoria's* cutter to the dockyard.

At 5.30 we landed the sick and injured survivors of the *Victoria* to Hospital. During our three and a half days' trip to Malta with the survivors, our casemates were used as temporary hospitals, the doctors and sick berth staff were busy attending to the sick and injured, some of whom were so badly hurt that they had to be laid on beds placed on the deck as it was difficult to lift them into cots or hammocks.

When Commander, now Earl, Jellicoe was brought on board he was in a very weak state, owing to the fever from which he was suffering at the time, and his subsequent immersion in the water, so Captain Acland very kindly had a cot hung up in his own cabin for him during the passage to Malta.

One man with whom I had a yarn had broken his thigh. He was captain of the fo'c'sle, and was therefore one of the men who were trying to place the

collision mat over the hole. He told me how his accident happened. On leaving the fo'c'sle he went aft to the 10-inch gun mounting; as the *Victoria* had heeled over bringing her port side nearly level, he and several others got outside. When he got as far down as the green seaweed on her bottom he slipped and fell between the propeller shaft and the ship's bottom, striking his thigh against the shaft casing. He managed to pull himself up, and with his sound leg shoved himself clear of the ship and just managed, by working his arms, to get outside the vortex caused by the revolving propeller.

He remembered very little afterwards until picked up. Amongst the survivors were two chief petty officers, one of whom, named Rolfe, was an east country gunnery instructor; the other was an old shipmate of mine, Dick May. As boy and man we served four years together in our first ship, H.M.S. *Amethyst*, but we had not seen each other since we paid off in 1878. Dick was Admiral Sir George Tryon's coxswain. Although with the other man he was victualled in our mess, we saw very little of him; where he stowed himself during the trip goodness knows! One evening I managed to have a yarn with him about old times, our conversation then turned to the disaster to the *Victoria*. May told me that he was in one of the cabins when the collision occurred and he remained there after the Admiral had gone on deck.

From what he told me the story which was circulated that his coxswain went on deck and offered Sir George Tryon a lifebuoy is absolutely wrong. He said, "Pat, what happened was this: finding myself in the cabin alone, I went out on the Admiral's stern walk. As she was heeling over I pulled myself by the rail well up on the port side; seeing by the position of the ship that it was hopeless, I unhooked one of the two lifebuoys, which are always kept hung up outside on the walk, and

jumped clear with the lifebuoy and swam away from the ship. Shortly afterwards she sank. I rendered assistance to a couple of men after she had gone down, until we were picked up."

He told me he had brought the lifebuoy on board with him, but I never saw it. He said it was aft in the captain's cabin, and that he intended to take it to England to present it to Lady Tryon, which I believe he did.

CHAPTER XXXV

CRUISING IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

WHILE lying at Malta on July 6th, the ships in harbour dressed ship-rainbow fashion, and fired a salute of twenty-one guns in honour of the wedding of the Duke of York and Princess Mary, our present King and Queen.

A few days later Roman Catholics from all ships at Malta attended a special funeral service held on shore for the late Sir George Tryon, and the officers and men lost in the *Victoria*. The *Edgar* landed eighty men in charge of our Torpedo Lieutenant Edward S. Fitzherbert now Admiral the Hon. Sir Edward S. Fitzherbert. There were more than a hundred Roman Catholics in the *Edgar*.

Ten days afterwards the *Edgar* joined the fleet at Sunda Bay. After carrying out general exercises, the fleet sailed for Phalerum Bay, near Athens. I had several opportunities for visiting Athens while anchored in the bay. I, with two of my messmates, spent two whole days exploring the city, standing on the Hill of Mars, where St. Paul is said to have preached to the Athenians. We visited the Acropolis and other places of interest, including the Royal Palace.

On being shown around by one of the attendants we came to the Throne Room; the attendant pointed out the Throne, a high backed chair covered with red velvet with fringes of gold, and with a canopy of the same colour. The whole of the raised portion, which ran the length of the room, was covered in red cloth.

Cruising in the Mediterranean

While the attendant was explaining in broken English something of importance and interest to my messmates I ran up the steps and sat on the Throne, imagining myself as one of a long line of Kings! but for a moment only, for the attendant soon pulled me out of the chair and took us to another room. I have thus had the satisfaction of having sat on a Throne around which there have been many changes since that time.

Her Imperial Majesty, the Empress Frederick of Germany visited the fleet on August 15th. The *Edgar's* picket boat was placed at the disposal of the Empress, taking her round the fleet before she embarked on board H.M.S. *Scout*.

The fleet sailed on August 23rd for Volo, where we played another game of Rugby with a team from H.M.S. *Nile*.

On Saturday forenoon I took a party of men ashore in the sailing pinnace, having borrowed some target poles from the carpenter for goal posts, and a few buckets of whitewash to mark out our lines on the sand, which at Volo was very firm; and placing small flags to mark the twenty five and half-way lines.

Having completed our job we returned on board to dinner and to get ready to play the match at 2.30. What sport! Carry your goal posts on shore, mark out your ground, play a good rousing game, clean and hard; after it is over take down the goal posts and return with them on board. Being sports, we were quite satisfied at making a draw with the Nile.

Our next cruise was to visit several islands in the Ægean Sea. On this trip a general signal was made to the fleet for the name and number of men who could not swim to be sent to the flagship. It was found that there were seventy-eight men in the *Edgar* who could not swim.

Commander F. W. Keary sent for me and gave me orders to take charge of the swimming party. We

would be piped to fall in every evening if the port we were visiting was found to be convenient for bathing. The other two instructors and the gymnasium instructor were to go on shore to assist me.

Whenever we came to a place where the bathing was safe I used to take our large party on shore with plenty of life-belts. The water in the Mediterranean was always nice and warm, consequently we could remain teaching the men for a long time before packing up.

By the exercise of patience and with a lot of trouble we gradually reduced our party of seventy-eight to half that number. I found that standing by the men and spreading the life-belt under the body they acquired the art of swimming more quickly than by putting the belt around them. The nervous ones required watching.

At Navarino a marine from one of the ships lost his life; the sands there being very treacherous and full of pits, we had trouble with some of the men slipping down. At last I felt confident that they were all able to swim. I used to try them by going well out and make them swim round me while I trod water. I reported to the Commander that evening. The following day he said the Captain would have them tested by making them dive off the fore gangway and swim to the after ladder. After evening quarters the swimming party were piped to fall in. Alfred Bacon, one of the instructors, had a list of names, while I went into the skiff to be ready for any emergency.

The Captain and most of the officers came up to see the test. It came off all right, though one or two of the men became a bit nervous and commenced to lash out and to hurry, but by going close to them in the skiff and giving them a word of encouragement, I got them to reach the gangway ladder.

The 2nd Division, sailing from Zante, where the currants come from, arrived at Corfu on October the

1st, where we found the 1st Division with H.M.S. *Sans Pareil*, flagship of Admiral Sir Michael Culme Seymour, who had been appointed to command the Mediterranean fleet. Other ships of the Division were H.M.S. *Camperdown*, *Hawke*, *Edinburgh*, *Amphion*, *Barham*, and *Scout*.

At Corfu it was decided to hold the annual Regatta, for which the racing boat's crews had been practising for months. I got together a crew for our pinnace and 42 foot launch, taking them away practising whenever the boats were hoisted out. The whole of the races were keenly contested, but the big ships took most of the prizes. The *Sans Pareil* won six first, the *Edgar* won the first in the officers' skiff race, and our chief petty officers came in third in the captain's galleys race. I steered our pinnace and, after a hard struggle, won the third prize.

Great preparations were made for the "All Comers" race, which was pulled over a straight course of five miles, finishing between the two flagships. Every kind of boat that could carry a crew was fitted out. Negro minstrels in copper punts, or in fact anything to make up a crowd. They had no idea of competing, but only entered to make fun. Most ships had a boat in the race to try and win the honour of carrying off the "All Comers" prize.

The boats were allowed to adopt any kind of rig, or to use as many oars as their boats would carry. Some of the galleys were fitted with extempore outriggers, making them look like Chinese snake boats.

There must have been quite fifty boats in a long line at the starting point, the boats having been towed there. When the starting gun was fired, the cheering of the coxswains, the beating of drums, and the noise of the different instruments could be heard for miles.

On October 15th a part of the fleet proceeded to Taranto. Entering the canal, we anchored in single

line. Two days later chief petty officers of the Fleet received an invitation to dinner and to an entertainment from the chief petty officers of the Italian battleship *Italia*.

Leave was granted by the Commander-in-Chief for us to attend, so four of the six in my mess were rowed on board the *Italia*, and were shown around the ship by men of our own rank.

We sat down to tables in the main battery, which was large enough to accommodate nearly two hundred men. We enjoyed a splendid meal, cooked and served as only Italians know how. After the meal Admiral Culme Seymour came on board, and as we sat enjoying our wine he gave us a very fine speech, saying how proud he was that, thanks to the hospitality of the chief petty officers of the *Italia*, the petty officers of the British and Italian services were fraternising together in such a friendly manner. Having charged our glasses the Admiral gave the Toast, and we all drank the health of the officers and men of the Italian Navy.

We left the *Italia* at 11-30 p.m., being rowed to our respective ships by their chief petty officers. They were very jolly, and so were we!

On October 20th the Fleet weighed anchor and steamed around the *Italia*, manning and cheering ship. We passed through the canal to Spezia where Italian torpedo boats came out to escort the fleet into the harbour. After spending a week there we left for Gibraltar, and then on to Malta, arriving there on November 11th.

While at Malta the *Edgar* carried out musketry practice on the Ranges, which took us three weeks to carry through. A month later we went into dry dock for a clean down outside the ship, and on the following day H.M.S. *Malabar* secured to the jetty quite close to our ship. She had broken down off Malta, and had come into harbour for repairs. The *Malabar* was on

her way to India with troops, also having on board several prospective brides who were going out to India to be married. It was usual to find some of these in every troopship.

Our band used to play on the dockside for two hours every evening while the *Malabar* lay there. Our men soon found partners for a dance from among the brides-to-be. They enjoyed the change from being tied up in a ship. The *Malabar* left on December 26th much to the men's regret. On coming out of dock we remained at Malta until ordered to proceed to Volo where we found H.M.S. *Nile*, *Vulcan*, and *Barham*. On January 21st, 1894, Captain Dyke Acland was invalided home. It could be seen by any keen observer that the station did not agree with him; he did not appear to have a robust constitution. The *Edgar* was soon afterwards ordered to proceed to Alexandria in order to relieve our sister ship H.M.S. *Hawk*. After picking up a pilot we were secured head and stern to two buoys in the harbour on February 5th. The two ships fixed up a Rugby match for the following day; the game being played on the open space in front of the Khedive's Palace on fine hard sand. Commander, now Admiral Sir Cecil Burney was the captain of the *Hawk's* team. After a very sporting game it ended in another draw.

We had some fine games with the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment stationed at Mustapha Barracks; also with some of the ships calling at Alexandria while we were there.

Captain Dyke Acland was succeeded on February 15th, 1894, by Captain (now Admiral Sir William) Hannam Henderson who brought with him a host of new ideas which revolutionised the fighting and internal organisation of the ship. Captain Henderson commenced by giving lectures explaining his reasons for these changes, showing they were intended to make the

ship more efficient. He frequently said, "You may call them the Captain's fads if you like," a word which stuck—"but you will find they will work," and they did.

Lieutenant, now Vice-Admiral E. F. Bruen joined the *Edgar* on March 21st as gunnery lieutenant, in the place of Lieutenant R. G. Gregory invalided home. We left Alexandria a month later, calling at Aboukir Bay, and proceeding thence to Malta, where we arrived on April 24th.

One evening we were having an argument in our mess about boat pulling. I said I could give any of them a hundred yards start in a race in skiffs up French Creek and back. George Tickle, the chief writer, whose father was a coastguard man, and who was therefore brought up in a boat, so to speak, accepted the challenge. We hired two skiffs, and the race came off one Saturday afternoon.

Getting in position we were started by Lieutenant Bruen firing a rifle. Away we went, old George a hundred yards ahead. All hands were up to see two big chief petty officers rowing a race, rather an unusual sight. On getting to the buoy at the end of the Creek, I saw I had reduced his lead by more than half, and, on getting near to the ship I was about level with him when coal lighters being towed, got in our way. I cleared quickly and waited for my opponent to clear also, saying "Come on, George." It was no good, he was played out. I won because I was better trained. Playing football kept me fit.

On May 17th the Fleet left Malta on a most interesting cruise, H.M.S. *Ramillies*, as flagship, leading us out. Proceeding to Malamocco, not far from Venice, where we called for a short stay, leave was granted to the men, who were taken up to Venice and back in a tug.

I, with two others, spent quite a time visiting the Doge's Palace and other places of interest, especially

D. Williams, Gunner. Lieut. E. F. Bruen, Gunnery Lieut. The Author on his left, Chief Gunnery Instructor.
Two Gunnery Instructors. Two Armourers. Two A. Mates.
Storekeeper.

GUNNERY STAFF H.M.S. EDGAR, 1894

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the glass factories, which turn out some of the beautiful work exposed for sale in St. Mark's Square.

We also had a trip on the Grand Canal, viewing the fine hotels with stairs leading down to the water's edge, and gondolas tied up, just like taxis on a rank waiting for hire.

Leaving Malamocco the Fleet proceeded to Trieste. I embraced every opportunity of going ashore at each place we called at in the Adriatic.

Spending a week at Trieste, we proceeded to Fiume, and then on to Spalato and Ragusa; petty officers being granted leave at each place until 8 p.m. One could not help noticing the picturesque style of dress worn by the women folk, who were carrying fancy but strong baskets on their bonny arms. I was very pleased with our visit to those places.

On June 18th, the *Edgar* and *Scout* sailed for Valona, leaving the following day for Malta on passage, and carrying out our annual steam trial.

Arriving at Malta, the *Edgar* went into dry dock to clean the ship's bottom.

The Fleet left for Gibraltar, arriving there on July 7th. Gibraltar caters for bluejackets on shore in the way of providing dance halls and extempore music halls.

We remained for ten days before leaving for a cruise, visiting places I was anxious to see. The Fleet visited Valencia, Tarragona, Barcelona and Palma, Majorca, spending several days at each place. We then left for Palmas Bay in Sardinia, returning to Malta on August 13th.

The *Edgar's* last cruise in the Mediterranean was in the Ægean Sea. The Fleet left Malta for Suda Bay, August 22nd, arriving there August 25th, leaving for Tenedos on Sunday, September 2nd, arriving September 3rd, and remaining until the 14th to enable the Commander-in-chief and several Captains to pay their

customary respects to the Sultan, men-of-war not being allowed to enter the Dardanelles.

We then visited Lemnos and Thaso. The Cruiser squadron left for Phalerum Bay, where we arrived September 28th, and had general leave; left the Piraeus for Salonika, arriving there October 6th. To a man who wishes to visit places of historic interest and see people of many nationalities, the Mediterranean is a splendid station on which to serve. There were no long trips at sea, no salt pork and biscuits; but instead we had plenty of leave and change.

I felt satisfied with what I had seen, while visiting the different countries of the Mediterranean.

CHAPTER XXXVI

AT SALONIKA. THE "EDGAR" ORDERED TO CHINA

WHILE at Salonika a rumour went around the ship that the *Edgar* and *Spartan* were to be sent to China. I was delighted when the rumour was confirmed, as it would enable me to see different parts of China and Japan, for although they were at war with each other I should be able to observe the customs of the people at first hand.

H.M.S. *Aeolus* had already left the Mediterranean for China. Captain W. H. Henderson now received orders to proceed to China with H.M.S. *Edgar* and *Spartan*; thus three West Country fast cruisers were sent to strengthen the Fleet of Vice-Admiral Fremantle on the China station during the war between China and Japan of 1894-5.

Both ships completed their complement of men and stores from ships of the Fleet, receiving ammunition and shell to fill up their magazine and shell rooms. They then weighed and proceeded to Port Said where we arrived and secured to a buoy at 5 a.m. on October 13th. Coal lighters came alongside at 5.30, and we finished coaling in four hours and a half, which was smart work.

One of the sights at Port Said for passengers in the liners going through the Canal for the first time is the motley crowd that comes off to coal the ship. The hideous noise they make, jabbering away in an unknown tongue, and their grotesque make-up are enough to

frighten a lady passenger who has never seen it before.

Embarking a pilot, we entered the Canal at 5.45 the next morning, stopping to exchange pilots at Ismailia.

On arriving at Suez at 6 p.m. the *Edgar* remained at anchor until the *Spartan* came out of the Canal, which she did at 8.15 the next morning, both ships then proceeded through the Red Sea to Aden.

We remained there two days, giving night leave to petty officers, a few of us fell in with some sergeants of the 2nd Gloucester Regiment which had received orders for England after spending several years in India. They invited us to spend the evening with them at their barracks, where we had a very pleasant time.

Both ships left Aden on October 22nd for Colombo, then on to Singapore, where we arrived on November 4th, securing the ship to the coaling wharf.

The Chinese coolies were very smart in putting 360 tons into our bunkers. They had a splendid system for coaling a ship; a string of coolies working in pairs, each pair carrying a huge round basket slung on a bamboo pole, from the stack on shore and over the gangways to the coal bunkers of the ship; as they approached the gangway with their load they received a small metal disc for each basket of coal. There were no dawdlers among them, they kept up a regular jog-trot the whole time.

We left the same evening for Hong Kong, embarking a pilot to take the ship outside the harbour. We had been very fortunate in experiencing fine weather the whole journey to Singapore

The second day out we had a change, running into a very strong N.E. monsoon which blows in the China Sea at this time of the year, with heavy seas breaking over the fo'c'sle, carrying away the "breakwater" which had been fixed in a half-circle across the fo'c'sle to

protect the foremost 9.2 gun. The seas bent the securing stays holding the gun mounting.

Captain Henderson eased the engines, while we put on tackles to assist the stays in holding the mounting, but even then the seas were breaking right over the forepart, striking the foremost bulkhead with such force that it sent the spray on to the upper bridge.

The next day the weather quietened down a bit. The *Edgar* dropped astern so as to bring the *Spartan* on our port beam, when photographs were taken from each ship. I think it was Dr. Richards who took a photograph of the *Spartan* she was still pitching and rolling very heavily. The third day, the weather cleared and the seas went down, and the engine-room staff soon made up for lost time, arriving in Hong Kong on November 9th.

The Maltese bumboatmen who had been catering for the ship's company all the way out had decided to return home. There is a saying that a Jew cannot live in Malta owing to the thriftiness of the Maltese; our bumboatmen found that they would have a hard struggle to compete against the Chinese, so they decided to go home.

The caterers of messes met and decided to see the Commander about having a canteen, using the same storerooms as the Maltese had done. Commander Keary agreed to the suggestion and brought the matter before the Captain, who consented.

An election was held on the lower deck to select one man from each rating to form a committee to look after their interests. I was elected to represent the chief petty officers and to the post of executive manager.

The committee met in the Captain's cabin, when he explained his views as to how the canteen should be carried on, and he appointed Lieutenant H. A. Adam to be officer in charge, and the chief writer as secretary. The great difficulty in starting a canteen was to get

credit from the compradores, who, on account of the war, did not seem inclined to risk supplying the ship as she was going north and might be away from Hong Kong for two years.

I was sent on a mission to try what I could get from the regimental messes, and succeeded in getting a thousand dollars' worth of hams, cheese and tins of preserves from the Royal Engineers staff sergeants' mess delivered that night in their own steam launch. I came on board with it, reporting what I had done to Lieutenant Adam, and hands were soon employed in clearing the launch and stowing the provisions below.

Probably the news that we had succeeded in getting a stock from the soldiers had got to the ears of the compradores, for one of them, whose name was Ah Sam came alongside in the morning and said he was willing to supply the ship with ten thousand dollars' worth. Lieutenant Adam called a meeting and we decided to accept his offer. The provisions came off and were checked by the list before being stowed away. We required a considerable amount of food besides our service rations to supply the needs of five hundred men in the prime of "Naval" life where a man is reckoned old after thirty.

The Maltese officers, stewards and cooks were discharged to H.M.S. *Victor Emanuel*, the guardship at Hong Kong; being replaced by Chinese. At first it was a puzzle to tell the difference between Ah Sam and Ah Sing.

H.M.S. *Edgar* and *Spartan* left Hong Kong for Chefoo on November 17th. On our arrival four days later, we found a large Fleet of ships of different nationalities there. Our Fleet comprised H.M.S. *Centurion*, Flagship of Admiral Fremantle; H.M.S. *Crescent*, *Severn*, *Aeolus*, *Leander*, *Mercury*, *Daphne* and *Pigmy*. The French cruiser *Bayard* the American cruiser *Baltimore*, also Russian and German ships of war were there.

As we had only recently left the tropics our men felt the bitterly cold north wind blowing at Chefoo, it being sharp enough to freeze the marrow in our bones. These sudden changes are enough to try the constitution of the strongest. Winter clothing was not supplied in those days.

The Fleet, under the command of Vice-Admiral Fremantle proceeded to sea for a cruise on November 23rd, and came to anchor off Port Arthur, which had been captured by the Japanese. Their Fleet, looking sombre in its grey, drab-coloured paint, was anchored close in shore. Occasionally we heard the sound of heavy guns. I think the Japanese gunboats were firing at some forts away on the hills.

Our Fleet left Port Arthur two days later for another cruise. Our Admiral was anxious, no doubt, to find out what the next move of the Japanese would be. He had sent our light cruisers out scouting, but the Japanese were as artful as a wagon load of monkeys, they gave nothing away. While on this cruise—whether we learnt the wrinkle from the Japs or not—all ships fitted with torpedo net defence, were instructed to cut and fit their bow and stern defence nets into an awning to cover the whole of the upper deck, so as to act as splinter nets over the gun crews. We also made rope mantelets or screens on both sides of each gun, laid hawsers over the iron beams and interlaced the parts with three-inch rope, making a kind of sennit.

The Fleet called at Hope Sound and went on to the Saddle Islands, not far from Shanghai, where we were joined by H.M.S. *Spartan* and the gunboat *Pigeon*.

Weighing anchor on December 5th, we proceeded to Woosung, mooring ship the same evening. General leave was granted to the Fleet, the men being taken up to Shanghai and brought back again to their respective ships by the gunboat *Redpole*.

While the ship was lying at Woosung, our Canteen was running short of tins of preserved food and I was instructed to proceed to Shanghai to purchase what was required. I asked permisssion to be allowed to visit H.M.S. *Caroline*. She was anchored close in shore, I wanted to see her boatswain, who was a relative of mine. After my visit I was landed in her boat at the pier close to the Custom House at Woosung, and introduced to the official on duty. As it was getting dark I asked him if he could get a conveyance to take me to Shanghai. He kindly sent one of his coolies to get a man, after waiting what seemed to be ages we heard the rumbling sound of a cart which stopped outside the door. On looking out I saw a Chinaman wearing a huge straw hat seated in an open cart behind a mule. He had a large Chinese lantern fixed, one on each side of him, as headlights, there was only a board for me to sit on. I thanked the customs officer who had arranged about my fare, wishing him good-bye I clambered into the cart which started on its eventful journey, an awful experience; it was bitterly cold, not a light could be seen except in the distance from the numerous junks anchored in the river Whangpoo. The wheels of the cart frequently sunk into a rut, causing it to tilt over to a dangerous angle. I was for three hours seated close behind that Chinaman inhaling the obnoxious odours from his body and pigtail. Only those who have had first hand experience of the lower classes in China can realise what it means. I was thankful when we arrived in Shanghai, and I was able to have a bath and go to bed. The next day I purchased what I required for the canteen, arranging to have it brought to the jetty, where I knew our picket boat would call for officers on shore. After we had shoved off a terrific snowstorm broke over us. Mr. W. B. Compton, the midshipman in charge, asked me to take spells at the wheel with the coxswain, as it was bitterly cold, so we relieved each

other every quarter of an hour until we arrived alongside, and as the storm had increased in force the boat was hoisted inboard.

Shortly afterwards the Fleet left for Port Arthur, arriving there on December 17th, where the *Edgar* parted company and proceeded to the Saddle Islands to spend Christmas, 1894.

The canteen committee were busy preparing for the orders from the caterers of messes for Christmas dinner, each mess making out a list of the poultry they would require. When the secretary showed me the list, ordering one hundred geese and two hundred fowls, it seemed a big order, but when you consider that there were more than five hundred hearty young men on the lower deck, who seldom saw poultry on their table, you can imagine that they would make short work of a nicely cooked goose or fowl.

A gunboat H.M.S. *Pigmy* was going up to Shanghai with the officers stewards for their marketing, so I was sent with them to order the poultry and several other necessaries.

I returned to the gunboat in order to see about the goods I had purchased from the comprador and to arrange with him to send along the poultry, all alive, two days before Christmas. He said, "Me savvy." The stewards arriving on board the *Pigmy* proceeded to sea and, anchoring quite close to the *Edgar*, our cargoes were soon transferred on board and were taken charge of by the canteen servers or attendants.

December 23rd at 3.30 p.m. our poultry arrived in a large Chinese junk, securing her alongside, our two canteen attendants went on board to pass up the birds; George Tickle, the secretary, standing in the gangway, ready with his list. The bo'sun's mate piped "hand of a mess for poultry."

It did not take long for a crowd of smiling faces to gather around the gangway. As each caterer gave the

number of his mess, George would shout out to the attendants in the junk, "one goose and three fowls," or "two geese and two fowls," according to his list. You should have seen how Jack drove his poultry for'ard for slaughter, fastening a piece of spunyarn to one of their legs and driving them along the deck by shouting and waving arms. It was all over at last, and the birds killed, picked and got ready for Christmas dinner by experts; each mess attaching a label to its own birds.

We enjoyed a very happy Christmas, having the usual decorations in our messes, and also aloft.

CHAPTER XXXVII

CAPTURE OF WEI-HAI-WEI BY THE JAPANESE, FEBRUARY, 1895

H.M.S. *Edgar* joined the Fleet on January 6th, at Chefoo, and left again on a cruise, observing the Japanese the Fleet being kept on the run trying to find out what their next move would be. Anchoring at Chemulpo, in Korea, on January 18th we left again for Chefoo, on Monday 21st, and at 5 a.m. the next day we sighted the Japanese Fleet; Vice-Admiral Ito in his flagship *Matsushima* and eight others. The same afternoon we came across several Japanese gunboats firing at forts. Our Fleet arrived at Chefoo at 5.30 p.m. on January 23rd.

The *Edgar* was dispatched to Yung Ching Bay two days later, passing on its way several Japanese ships and torpedo boats off the Shantung Promontory. We anchored in the bay passing through a Fleet of Japanese transports which had brought thirty thousand troops to march on Wei-hai-wei.

During the whole of the operations which were carried out by the Japanese on the Shantung Promontory, it was bitterly cold. In the evening our Commander used to exercise the men by making them double around the upper deck in single file, the band playing a double march tune. Around and around they would do for about twenty minutes, so as to circulate their blood. I remember having to carry out Morris Tube firing on the quarter-deck, at four box targets right aft.

The major portion of the party remained under cover of the bridge, only coming out to fire and change the targets, whereas I had to remain in the open the whole time, feeling the blast of the cold wind cutting through me. Just before I had finished, my messmate, Jack Underhill, the torpedo instructor, came chaffing me about how cold I looked. I said, "Jack, if you stand out there for half an hour you can have my tot to-day." God knows that was a terrible risk to run, the chance of sacrificing my tot of rum! I never thought he could stick it, but he did, I lost my tot for that day, just when I badly wanted it; but being a sport I chanced it. When Jack came for'ard his face was red, blue and green. It just shows what a man would do in those days for a tot of rum.

On January 26th the Japanese Fleet arrived with Vice-Admiral Ito in command. He came on board the *Edgar* the next day to return a visit to our captain. I was sent for to explain to Admiral Ito the working of the breech mechanism of our 6-inch quick-firing gun, as they were of the latest pattern; the Admiral took a very keen interest in the working of the guns. I also showed him the 9.2 gun and explained the working of it to him.

As the Japanese army closed around Wei-hai-wei, their Fleet used to go out and bombard the forts on shore; the *Edgar* steaming out to observe the operations, but, of course, keeping out of range of the Chinese guns, which always replied to the fire of the Japanese though once or twice stray shots came very close to us. We returned with the Japanese in the evening to their rendezvous, "Three Peak Bay." We knew that Japanese torpedo boats used to go out every night endeavouring to attack the Chinese ships under Admiral Ting, which were moored in the harbour, and on February 7th we felt that a special effort was to be made by a combined attack by the Army and Navy, so the *Edgar* moved out with the Fleet in order to watch the operations.

Capture of Wei-Hai-Wei

During the bombardment, Admiral Fremantle arrived in H.M.S. *Porpoise* and transferred to the *Edgar* which proceeded at 3 p.m. to Three Peak Bay, the Japanese Fleet returning at 5.45. During the night we heard continuous firing; the Japanese Fleet had moved out at 11.45 p.m. in order to support their torpedo boats in making their final attack on the ships in the harbour.

They succeeded in sinking the *Ting Yuen* and two other ships. At 7 a.m. on February 8th another Japanese Fleet arrived with transports. The *Edgar* and *Porpoise* weighed anchor and proceeded off Wei-hai-wei to observe the Japanese, who were continuing the bombardment, Admiral Fremantle transferring his flag to *Porpoise*.

The *Edgar* proceeded to Chefoo, passing several Chinese torpedo boats stranded on the beach; those who had managed to escape from the harbour during the night. Arriving at Chefoo at 6.45 p.m., February 14th, we weighed anchor with the *Centurion* flagship, *Gibraltar*, *Severn*, *Aeolus* and *Alacrity* and proceeded to Three Peak Bay. Wei-hai-wei surrendered shortly afterwards, when we learned that Admiral Ting and five of his captains had committed suicide.

We parted company and sailed for Nagasaki, arriving there on February 17th, when we found that several Russian ships and the Japanese cruiser Fleet anchored there.

The *Edgar* coaled ship; this being carried out by Japanese women and girls. The whole of the work was done by them with the exception of securing the lighters to the ships and rigging the stages for the girls to stand on. It was simply marvellous to see those little Japanese girls in their blue-coloured dresses, with a blue and white handkerchief put over their hair and tied under the chin, standing on the stages fixed like steps up the ship's side, and passing small round baskets holding ten or fourteen pounds of coal, quickly from hand to hand

in an ever running stream, without cessation, until the lighter was empty, and then waiting for the next, until the ship had probably eight or nine hundred tons of coal on board.

On March 5th we proceeded to Chefoo, visiting Port Hamilton, where, during our occupation, a garrison of eight hundred marines was stationed.

On our arrival at Chefoo we found a large Fleet of ships of different nationalities assembled. Several of the Russian ships had sent down their top-masts and yards and landed them on the beach, with the idea of preparing for action in case of need, in view of the settlement of the Peace terms between China and Japan.

It looked very much like so many vultures, waiting to pounce down on Japan the victor, for their share of the spoils of war.

The *Edgar* sailed for Wei-hai-wei, where leave was granted to petty officers. I went on shore to explore the island, finding part of a 4.7 inch armour-piercing shell which had been exploded by its fuse on contact, and as the point and half the chamber for the burster were intact I brought it on board and gave it to Lieutenant Bruen, our gunnery officer. I saw the same piece of shell mounted in a case in the Ammunition Lecture room at the Naval Barracks at Devonport, while I was serving there during the late war.

Our next trip was to Talienwan, where the Japanese landed an Army Corps. We then proceeded to Port Arthur, and as leave was granted to chief petty officers, I went on shore to look around that famous dockyard and arsenal. I was fortunate enough to come across a Japanese soldier who was attached to the Hospital and could speak very good English. He said he would be very pleased to show me round. We came to a point where there was a huge accumulation of snow, with only a narrow pathway to get around the point. He took me there in order to point out some hills where engage-

Standing left to right:
T. Bunker, Ship's Steward; H. Taylor, Ship's Cook; Geo. Tickle, Chief Waiter.
Sitting left to right:
T. Stanley, Chief Bosun's Mate; W. Smith, A.B., "Messboy"; I. Underhill, Chief Torpedo Inst.; The Author, Chief Gunnery Instructor.

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MESSMATES H.M.S. EDGAR, AT NAGASAKI, 1895

ments had taken place during the Japanese attack on the dockyard. While we were there a company of Japanese soldiers passed us going out on out-post duty. I could not but help noticing their efficient equipment; a spare pair of boots was secured to the sides of their knapsack, which was covered with the hide of a bullock, with the reddish hair outside. What particularly caught my attention was that every fourth man carried a pair of binoculars slung over his shoulders, while their rifles were covered with a light cotton oiled rag twisted around the barrel. I returned on board quite satisfied with my visit to Port Arthur.

The *Edgar* left for Chefoo on March 17th, arriving there the same day. Five days later, what was formerly a Chinese dispatch boat, but with all her guns removed, came alongside the jetty at Chefoo to carry the remains of Admiral Ting and his captains home to their ancestral burial places. There are no people in the world, from my experience of them, who worship with such veneration at the tombs of their ancestors as the Chinese. Their remains are brought from all parts of the world to China to be buried.

At 1.30 a funeral party, representing the different nationalities of the ships in the harbour, was landed. The *Edgar* landed a company of bluejackets and a company of marines under the command of Lieutenant E. F. Bruen, our company being drawn up close to the landing stage.

One could not but notice the difference between the movements of the various representative groups as they were getting into position; the rigid manner in which the Germans and Russians moved into positions in great contrast to ourselves and the Americans.

At about 2.30, the funeral procession appeared in sight, wending its way slowly towards us. Admiral Ting's coffin was a huge affair, carried on bamboo poles by some fifty Chinese coolies. How they managed to

rig the poles around the coffin so that the coolies could get their shoulders under, I do not know. It looked like a scaffold round a building.

As the cortege passed us I saw that Admiral Ting's son, who was the chief mourner, wore a loose oatmeal coloured garb which covered the whole of his head and body, but provided with little holes through which he could see and breathe. His sleeves were extremely long, as Chinese generally wear them—and he was supported by two men holding his arms as he dragged himself along in front of his father's coffin.

The remains of the captains were borne along in a similar manner and were hoisted on board the vessel. As she steamed out of the harbour on her way to Shanghai, the ships in harbour fired 15 minute guns.

On March 27th, the *Edgar* left on a cruise, and at 10.40 a.m. while passing Ning-hai, the forts on shore fired four shots at us, thinking we were Japanese. As our hull was painted black we were plainly visible; their direction was good, but their elevation short; we could see the shells coming toward us before dropping into the water. It reminded me of the "Blacksmith's anvils" fired by the Peruvian *Huascar*.

Captain Henderson altered course to get out of range, but they fired three more shots at us, though without any effect.

Returning to Chefoo for orders, the *Edgar* left immediately for the entrance of the Peiho River, in the Gulf of Pechihli and anchored off the Taku forts.

Our picket boat was hoisted out and fitted with iron plates so as to protect her bows, and enable her to cut her way through the ice on her trip to Tientsin. The Captain having carried out his instructions returned to Chefoo, where a large Fleet of ships, representing the different nations who were interested in the Treaty of Peace, were assembling. Admiral Fremantle was there in his flagship, H.M.S. *Centurion*.

Capture of Wei-Hai-Wei

On May 27th, a Japanese steamer arrived with Li Hung Chang, the Chinese Envoy, on board. Four days later, the Russian Fleet sailed from Chefoo. The *Edgar* sailed for Nagasaki; arrived there on May 18th, when the ship was put into dry dock. There being only just sufficient water to float us in at high tide, we had to remove all the shells from the after shell rooms and transport them to the forepart of the ship so as to put her on an even keel.

While the men were employed scrubbing the ship's bottom and as the water was being pumped out, an incident happened which showed the keenness of the Japanese in securing information whenever they can.

A Japanese officer walked down the steps of the dock and quickly made a sketch of our underwater fittings for firing a submerged torpedo. The *Edgar* was one of the first ships to be fitted with submerged tubes. One of our officers, seeing him, ordered him away; he went, but he took his sketch book with him!

The Bo'sun was ordered to have a tarpauling placed over the hole, and I was instructed to post bluejacket sentries with side arms. They were to remain on duty on the dockside while the ship remained in dock.

About a week later H.M.S. *Leander*, Captain Count F. C. Metaxa, my old captain in the *Calypso*, arrived at Nagasaki. My messmate, Jack Underhill, the chief torpedo instructor, and I were warned to get ready to join her the next day for passage to England, as our time for going on pension was drawing near, having served, by the time we should arrive in England, twenty years man's service, and three years as a boy.

It was a real bustle around for both of us packing up our curios; china tea-sets, pictures and the many things that one is induced to buy while visiting different places.

I left the *Edgar* with two splendid testimonials; one from Commander F. W. Keary, and the other from

my gunnery lieutenant, E. F. Bruen, who, I am sure, was sorry he was losing me, and I was pleased when he took me into his confidence as to my successor, and the other changes which were bound to take place on my leaving the ship.

Commander Keary, from his remarks to me, was sorry, I know, to lose Underhill and myself two of his executive chief petty officers.

Wishing our messmates and chums "good-bye," old Jack and I got into the boats with our chests and other belongings and reported ourselves on board the *Leander*.

The *Leander* was square rigged for'ard, with royal yards. We found ourselves rather cramped for space in comparison with the *Edgar* but the gunnery instructors kindly stowed our boxes of curios away and we soon settled down.

The following day six midshipmen joined the *Leander* for passage to England. I was sent for by the First Lieutenant and was ordered to take those young officers at Seamanship every forenoon. I thought to myself, "This is a fine thing for a gunnery instructor to teach seamanship," but, thanks to my early training in square-rigged ships, I was able to tackle it, and I used to take them up in the foretop and explain all about the fittings. I think I was able to teach them something which they would find useful in their exams.

They were transferred back to their own ships after three weeks as the *Leander* did not proceed home, as intended, but remained with the Fleet, which had now arrived. On May 30th, 1895, we weighed anchor with the Fleet, and went off on a cruise to the North of Japan, proceeding through the Inland sea to Kobe, then on to Yokohama, Sendai and Hakodati.

The fleet proceeded on a cruise in the sea of Japan, but we parted company off Vladivostok. On our homeward journey, we again visited Yokohama, buying

some more curios. We arrived at Hong Kong on August 19th, to wait for H.M.S. *Pique* to relieve us. We left a week later, calling at Penang, Colombo and Aden on our homeward journey.

Captain Metaxa had received orders to visit Hodeida and Jeddah in the Red Sea, because of some disturbance in those places. Arriving at Suez, on September 30th, we passed through the Canal to Port Said, then on to Malta and Gibraltar, arriving at Plymouth on Monday, October 15th, 1895.

I had taken the precaution of seeing Captain Henderson and asking him to forward my application to the Barracks at Devonport, and for my name to be put on the Roster for a Naval Reserve Battery, which he very kindly did.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

MY LAST LAP

ALL supernumeraries were discharged to the Royal Naval Barracks, Devonport. It was the first time I had ever been in barracks. I appeared before the Commodore and was informed that I was appointed to Exmouth Royal Naval Reserve Battery. Instructors at Batteries served on for pension for a period of five years, with the privilege of being able to leave for a better post by giving a month's notice. I served for five years and one month, until November 30th, 1900, drilling Naval Reserve men and Seamen Pensioner Reserves, from the district extending from Lyme Regis to Newton Abbot; also men from North Devon for twenty eight days drill each year.

When my old ship, the *Edgar*, arrived home, I spent a few days in Devonport visiting my old shipmates. I also saw most of the officers, especially Commander Keary and Lieutenant Bruen. They both seemed glad to see me; they knew about my appointment to the battery, and congratulated me.

I was invited to dinner in my old mess, where I also had a few "tots" before leaving. I learned then of the terrible disaster which had happened to our pinnace, when forty eight were drowned at Chemulpo. It was very strange that the man who had volunteered to take my place was drowned. It would seem that, after all, there was something lucky in the fact of having been born with a caul!

JOINED UP AGAIN, APRIL, 1916

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My Last Lap

Having served for five years and a month at the battery, I was discharged on pension, after twenty-eight years and one month continuous service. I at once joined the Royal Naval Pensioners' Reserve, performing fourteen days' drill every year until reaching fifty years of age; gunnery instructors being obliged to re-qualify every third year at a gunnery school.

I managed to put in one drill, in December, 1900, before leaving for Hong Kong in January, 1901, where I was appointed under the Colonial Government, by permission of the Admiralty, as Inspector of the Hong Kong Water Police.

I did two drills on board H.M.S. *Tamar*, the guardship, and on returning to England, in 1903, I completed the remainder of my drills in order to qualify for the Greenwich Pension on June 30th, 1907, which covered a period of thirty-five years; not a bad innings!

I, like many others who were over age, applied to the Admiralty to be allowed to serve the country, but received a letter from the Secretary of the Admiralty, which letter I still have, regretting to inform me that probably I should not be required during the War. I at once set about raising a Volunteer Training Corps, and interviewed the Bristol Board of Education for permission to use the Maxse Road Council School, Knowle, Bristol, where I was living at the time. I had printed the following notice, which I took around to the shopkeepers of Knowle and Totterdown, asking them to kindly put it in their windows, which they were quite willing to do. This is the notice which was posted up:

MEN OF KNOWLE.

The Country is passing through a serious crisis. I have been granted by the Education Committee the use of the large room in Maxse Road School, three

evenings a week. Having been chief and first-class Gunnery and Drill Inspector in the Royal Navy (18 years), I am willing to give my service Free for two hours each evening to instruct any man (whose circumstances prevent him from joining the colours) in Military Training as laid down in new Military Infantry drill book, 1914. Married men age twenty-three years to fifty years inclusive.

Those wishing to join must send their names or call at the address below, or assemble at the Council School at 7 p.m. on Monday, October 26th, 1914."

"Kowloon," Woodbridge Road, Knowle, Bristol.

PATRICK RILEY.

On Monday evening, at 7 p.m., the schoolroom was crowded. I selected as many as I could handle in the large room. One of my recruits purchased broom handles, which I painted, marking as a guide for the men the places where the detail came in, i.e., small of the butt, upper and lower band, and fore and back sight.

They made a fine show, and took a keen interest in their drill. I think it was the first corps of Volunteers raised in the country, and we kept it going until April, 1915. I also used to teach them firing on a miniature range.

In September, 1915, I returned to Exmouth, having become acquainted with a gentleman who was a friend of the Commodore at the Royal Naval Barracks. I begged him to write a letter to the Commodore and tell him how anxious I was to join up. He did so, with the result that in April, 1916, I had to appear at the Barracks for medical examination, taking with me a letter of introduction.

I passed as sound and fit for Home service. My service age was 58 years and seven months. Remaining

H.M.S. Dido, Depot Ship at Harwich, 1916

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in the barracks for a short period drilling new entries, I was later drafted to Harwich in H.M.S. *Dido*, which was secured to Parkestone Quay, as Depôt ship for Destroyers. Here I, with two other instructors, was sent to take charge of munition lighters. There were seven of them loaded up with munitions for the light cruisers and destroyer flotillas.

While serving at Harwich, I had an experience that falls to the lot of few men, of serving under an Admiral, Sir Reginald Y. Tyrwhitt, Bart., whom I used to take to drill at seven bells, when Sir Reginald was a midshipman in H.M.S. *Calypso*, and I was her gunnery instructor.

I returned to barracks on November 30th, 1916, and was "demobbed" in January, 1917.

After being demobilised, I was appointed, on February 12th, 1917, as Supervisor of Explosives at the Port of Plymouth, under the Ministry of Munitions. At that time ships were bringing over munitions of every description from America and Canada, and sometimes we would have five ships, each with five or six thousand tons of munitions on board, unloading at Devonport. Their cargoes had to be sent to all parts of the country; my duty being to supervise the handling and stowing of explosives. The transport workers used to call me the "Powder King."

Sometimes we had vessels in with over twenty thousand cases of T.N.T. or cordite, besides shells. Unfortunately for me, I got poisoned by the fumes of T.N.T.

After the Americans came into the War, very little was sent over, our own factories being able to manufacture sufficient explosives and shell, though we continued to receive steel bullets and rectified spirits. I returned home feeling satisfied that I had done my bit, and I should now be resting on my "arms reversed," but I was not allowed to do so, for I was elected a

member of the Urban District Council of Exmouth, in 1921. I was proud to be a member of the Council when H.R.H. the Prince of Wales paid a visit to Exmouth after the War; and, on being introduced to His Royal Highness, I had the privilege of shaking hands with him. The Prince, noticing that I was wearing the ex-serviceman's Silver Badge, kindly asked me a few questions about my services during the War.

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